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New York

President: Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Fu Cong
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. Dharmadhikari
Guyana	Ms. Persaud
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Cho
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
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/2024/700)

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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/2024/700)

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

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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 Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe, Executive Director, Change Your World.

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/2024/700, 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 you, Madam President, for this opportunity to present the Secretary-General's latest report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2024/700).

Since my previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.9615), the situation in the Great Lakes region and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular has remained alarming. The Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) has continued its territorial expansion

and currently controls more territory than it did in 2012. At the same time, I remain deeply concerned about the continuing activities of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has stepped up its attacks on civilians in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. The terrorist offshoots of the ADF pose a real threat to the entire subregion.

Those developments have had devastating consequences for the civilian population, with massive new displacement, making the Democratic Republic of Congo the country with the second highest number of displaced people in the world after the Sudan. That sad record should challenge us all to step up our collective diplomatic and humanitarian efforts to silence the guns once and for all and enable the Congolese people to return home in full safety and dignity. Until we achieve that, it is the civilian population that will continue to pay the heavy price of war on a daily basis — the loss of human life and the sexual violence, health problems and malnutrition at sites for internally displaced persons, not to mention the socioeconomic pressures that the war puts on the population. That continuing state of affairs has also contributed to the deteriorating relations between some States in the region, perpetuating a regional atmosphere of tension and suspicion.

Despite that bleak portrait, I can glimpse a real flicker of hope for the first time since the start of the crisis and the M23's resurgence in November 2021. After my most recent tour of the region, which took me in succession to Bujumbura, Kampala, Kigali, Kinshasa and Luanda, I can attest that the recent peace talks held under the Luanda process are encouraging and represent an important step towards silencing the guns and achieving a lasting peace. The ceasefire agreement signed on 30 July under Angola's auspices has contributed to a relative calm and, despite a few skirmishes, seems to be being widely observed. Those major developments have been made possible by the tireless efforts of the Angolan authorities, under the leadership of President João Lourenço, to facilitate and maintain dialogue between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We must therefore work collectively to guarantee and preserve the gains made so far. I would like to warmly congratulate the Mediator and the parties involved in the Luanda process. I also welcome the ongoing efforts being made within the framework of the East African Community, and I salute the commitment of President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan, in his current capacity as

Chairperson-in-Office of the East African Community, and the Facilitator, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, for their contribution to peace in the region and their efforts to strengthen the complementarity of the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

As with any mediation process, we know that the road to a final agreement is long and full of pitfalls. But we must continue to support them and encourage the parties to prioritize a path of dialogue, exercise restraint and maintain a constructive commitment to achieving a lasting peace. It is in that spirit of complementarity and coordination between the regional peace processes that I have stayed in constant contact with the various actors in the region, including the authorities, the mediation and facilitation teams and the leadership of the regional, subregional and civil society organizations involved.

But while encouraging strides have been made, much remains to be done to put an end to the suffering of the Congolese people and secure a lasting peace in the Great Lakes region. The involvement of multiple actors in the theatre of operations and the concomitant deteriorating relations between the countries of the region caught up in the crisis mean that the risk of renewed fighting remains high. I am therefore appealing urgently to the Security Council not to forget the crisis in the region and to do everything possible to ensure that the ceasefire in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo lasts and culminates in the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the parties. We must not let this opportunity slip. To that end, I would like to put forward three elements that I consider essential.

First, we need to bolster mutual trust between the parties and the countries of the region so that the ongoing efforts for peace can yield concrete results. I believe that all the main ingredients for doing that are in place. They are set out in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which still enjoys regional consensus when it comes to tackling the root causes of the conflict. We must seize the opportunity that the process of revitalizing the Framework Agreement is offering in order to inject it with fresh momentum. Complying with the Agreement and honouring and fully and unequivocally implementing all the stated undertakings made in 2013 will help foster good-neighbourly relations and restore mutual trust among the countries of the region. It is therefore paramount that all the principles that the Agreement sets out and the undertakings

regarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all of the countries in the region — particularly as regards refraining from supporting illegal armed groups — be scrupulously upheld.

Secondly, inclusivity — specifically, the full participation of women and youth in the ongoing peace processes — must be promoted if we are to address the root causes of the conflict. Spaces and platforms must be created to guarantee that those groups can participate from the moment the various processes are conceived in order to provide effective oversight and ensure the proper implementation of the resolutions to be adopted.

Lastly, consistent and considerable international efforts in support of regional peace processes and development initiatives remain critical. To that end, the 2024–2027 Action Plan of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, formulated four years ago, which is in the process of being developed, continues to be the ideal framework for shaping our collective action and capitalizing on the support of international partners. Although the regional and international context remains challenging, the United Nations bodies involved in implementing the Strategy can take pride in what they are accomplishing daily on the peace and security, development and humanitarian fronts in the Great Lakes region.

One of our flagship initiatives — to mention just one — enabled us to facilitate a verification mission undertaken by the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group on non-military measures for repatriating foreign fighters in South Kivu province. During the mission, the operational cell was able to round up and disarm fighters from the Burundian Forces nationales de libération armed group, who are now awaiting repatriation. The operation also saw the recovery of some weapons and ammunition, a positive development that bodes well for the future. In that regard, I urge the home countries of those initial volunteers to make admitting and reintegrating them a priority and thereby encourage other former fighters who are still wavering to take part in the process. I would like to thank our international partners for their ongoing support to the Strategy and ask them to continue to contribute to mobilizing the resources that the United Nations needs to bolster the ongoing diplomatic efforts with programmatic support.

We cannot discuss the deep roots of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region without considering the ongoing efforts, which I support, to combat the illicit exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources and artisanal gold in particular. In that regard, I have undertaken joint initiatives with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) aimed at encouraging greater support from partners for transparent governance and the traceability of strategic minerals in order to sever the link between such high-value resources and the armed groups that are active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the next few weeks — at my initiative and with the support of partners such as France, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the secretariat of the Kimberley Process — we will hold a meeting of the various international and regional stakeholders designed to strengthen the ICGLR's regional initiative, by drawing on the good practices that have come out of the Kimberley Process, which has had some success in the area of transparency in the raw diamond trade with the aim of securing lasting peace in various regions of Africa.

With the Summit of the Future concluding with a new global consensus that stands as a beacon of hope (General Assembly resolution 79/1), we have once again agreed to assume collective responsibility for no longer countenancing the suffering of civilian populations caught in the grip of endless conflict. Let us therefore seize the opportunities that the Luanda process and the revitalization of the Framework Agreement have presented us with to advance political solutions to the crisis and end the plight of the communities that have suffered for so many years. I am counting on the invaluable support of the members of the Council to give the peace efforts a chance and silence the guns in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo once and for all.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Ntambwe.

Ms. Ntambwe (*spoke in French*): I thank Switzerland, as the current holder of the presidency of the Security Council, for inviting me to address its members.

To begin with, I would like to invite Council members to close their eyes for a moment and imagine the situation that I am going to describe. Let us picture

a 40-year-old woman. After receiving some assistance, she comes up to us and says, “Even though I have been given assistance, it will not alleviate my pain. Not only was I raped in front of my children, their father was murdered before their eyes. Not only are they devastated about what happened to me, they are also grieving about what happened to their father.” Now imagine that that was our wife, sister or aunt.

Today I am not just a young Congolese human rights defender, but also the woman who is crying out in pain. I am the mother who begged me to help her tell the world that what we want most is peace, to never again see a child subjected to suffering, trauma and violence. I am the woman who must choose between putting food on the table this evening or paying for her children's schooling because borders closed. I am the child who died of malnutrition because my mother no longer has access to the fields of her co-workers or friends in the neighbouring country.

I am here before the Security Council to represent all those people affected by the cycles of conflict, war and violence in the Great Lakes region. I am speaking on behalf of my sisters, brave mothers, friends and colleagues in Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan civil society — those who are working day and night to restore peace and stability in the region. We are all united in the one and only demand to the actors in the region and the Security Council: the war must end, and it must end now. To achieve that, we, the most affected, the most vulnerable in the war, ask: “listen to us too”. Listen to us, we who are the first to be separated from our families, the first victims to be raped, killed, forcibly integrated into armed groups. Listen to us, we who are the first to rise up, as we are resilient, and to make the search for peace and stability a priority.

In the pursuit of peace, each of us has a role to play. At the local level, as a peacemaker and humanitarian, I make sure that the voices of the most affected by the conflict are heard by the armed forces, and I ask the armed actors to reduce the violence against civilians and to seek more peaceful settlements. I also strive to represent the needs of our population to political decision makers and donors. At the regional level, I call on the leaders of the Luanda process to explore concrete solutions to overcome the challenges of civil society representation.

We are grateful for the Security Council's efforts as part of the Luanda process. Nonetheless, we deplore the total disconnect between those most affected and the high-level diplomacy. The fact that there is no link between those two populations undermines local ownership and reduces the chances of implementing a lasting peace agreement.

For us and for all those in the region, the peace process is a glimmer of hope for those of us who dream of living in a better world where the sound of bombing and the cries of the dying will no longer be heard. That is why I am asking the members of the Security Council present in this Chamber to continue to call for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and to support an inclusive political dialogue.

My final message to donors is that, while humanitarian assistance is necessary, it is not the answer. Actions must be oriented towards a nexus approach. Affected populations need to develop and strengthen their resilience. It is also an opportunity to put an end to armed movements and reduce the recruitment of young people into armed movements, reduce violence and put an end to all armed violence in the region.

What I am asking Council members is that, in addition to making statements and promises, they implement concrete actions focused on the well-being, dignity, security and protection of the affected populations, but also focus their interventions on development and regional cohesion.

As a good Congolese woman, I will conclude by saying: we are in this together.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Ntambwe for her briefing.

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

Mr. Dharmadhikari (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Mr. Huang Xia and Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe for their briefings.

I would like to make three points.

First, the continuing instability in the Great Lakes region remains a grave source of concern. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/700) attests, violence between armed groups and against civilians continues, with an unacceptable toll in human casualties and

forced displacement. We must continue our efforts to respond to that massive humanitarian crisis.

The Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) continues to expand in North Kivu and South Kivu and to expand its control of mining areas, with the support of Rwandan forces on Congolese territory. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) continues to be responsible for human rights violations. The Allied Democratic Forces have stepped up their attacks on civilians in Ituri and North Kivu. The Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi group remains a destabilizing force in South Kivu. We condemn all those actions, and we reiterate our call for a collective mobilization to meet the immense humanitarian needs in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region contains three cardinal principles: not to support armed groups, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring States and not to harbour or provide protection to those accused of crimes and violations of international law. Those principles must be respected by all parties.

Secondly, we must express the Council's clear support for the mediation efforts under way to reach a peace agreement. The ceasefire in force since 4 August must be respected. Angola and its President João Lourenço are redoubling their efforts to resume the dialogue. France supports the Luanda process. On the sidelines of the Summit of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, in Paris at the end of last week, French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with his counterparts, Presidents Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo and Paul Kagame, to encourage them to pursue negotiations and reach an agreement as quickly as possible with a view to establishing a lasting peace. To that end, rapid progress is needed to implement the commitments made under the Luanda process, whether it be the plan for the withdrawal, cantonment and disarmament of the M23 and Rwandan forces or the plan to dismantle the FDLR. It is up to the Council to continue to provide steadfast support for the proper implementation of those commitments, as well as for Angola's mediation and all regional efforts.

Thirdly and finally, it remains essential to work to address the structural factors of the conflict. I am thinking in particular of the traceability and transparency of the mineral trade, which is currently

being used for the violent activities of armed groups. I am also thinking of support for dialogue among the members of the civil societies of the various countries and the promotion of economic development for the benefit of all populations in the region.

We applaud the work carried out by Special Envoy Mr. Huang Xia and his Office, as well as all the efforts of the entire United Nations, including those of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Bintou Keita, the agencies and the staff working on the ground.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the members of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Mozambique, and my own country, Sierra Leone, as well as Guyana (A3+).

The A3+ wishes to express its appreciation to Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his comprehensive briefing and relevant information on the situation in the region, as well as for his active engagement towards the attainment and consolidation of peace in the Great Lakes region. We also take good note of the perspectives proffered by Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe, Executive Director of Change Your World. The A3+ welcomes the presence and participation of Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the representatives of Angola and Rwanda in this meeting.

Our intervention will focus broadly on the security, political, economic and humanitarian situations in the region.

On the security and humanitarian fronts, the A3+ still remains deeply concerned about the continued deteriorating security situation in the region, which has resulted in untold suffering for the civilian population. Millions of men, women and children continue to be displaced, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Reports indicate high levels of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence and exploitation of women and children, particularly around camps for internally displaced persons. These acts are gross violations of international law, including

international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The A3+ condemns in the strongest terms all acts of violence, human rights violations and abuses perpetrated against unarmed civilians by all local and foreign armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge Member States, the international community and all relevant stakeholders to scale up their support in order to enable humanitarian assistance to the people and countries within the Great Lakes region who require that assistance. We further call on all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate unimpeded, rapid and safe access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations, especially women and children, and to respect and protect humanitarian personnel, assets and infrastructure.

On the political situation, the A3+ welcomes the ceasefire between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We acknowledge the mediation efforts of President João Lourenço of Angola in the context of the Luanda process and urge the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to maintain their engagement towards a peaceful and lasting resolution of their differences. We reiterate our strong support to that end. The A3+ also underscores the importance of the Nairobi process for addressing the problem of local armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and calls on the Congolese Government to take all measures for its full operationalization. We also express our support for the efforts of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and other international partners towards a sustainable solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that vein, addressing the root causes of regional conflicts should remain at the forefront of any engagement aimed at achieving sustainable peace.

The A3+ takes this opportunity to remind all countries that acceded to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region to honour their obligations and act in good faith so as to ensure its effective implementation, particularly through the immediate cessation of all support to armed groups operating throughout the entire conflict-affected area, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The A3+ strongly believes that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remains critical in providing an effective

mechanism for resolving conflicts and restoring peace and sustainable development in the region.

The A3+ once again calls on all Congolese and foreign armed groups to immediately and unconditionally lay down their arms and engage in the disarmament process and, particularly, to encourage the resumption of the Nairobi process as a platform for inter-Congolese dialogue.

To that end, the A3+ commends the relentless and dynamic posture of regional leaders, including President João Lourenço of Angola, President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan, and Chair of the East African Community (EAC) and former President Uhuru Kenyatta, towards intensifying the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes. We therefore urge all the parties to seize this opportunity now to silence the guns and give peace, security and development a chance to subsist in the region.

The A3+ further underscores the relevance and the critical need for the coordination and complementarity of the political processes, as highlighted, among others, in the communiqué of the eleventh high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, as well as the communiqué of the quadripartite summit of the EAC, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community, under the auspices of the African Union.

The Great Lakes region has significant mineral resources, which, if properly managed, could provide the countries of the region with opportunities to structurally transform their economies and build an area of shared prosperity. In that regard, the A3+ supports the timely implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which aims to prevent the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region, in order to ensure the transparent management of its natural resources. We commend the efforts of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes to advance sustainable economic development as a pathway for peace in the region so as to enable the hundreds of thousands of young men and women adversely affected by the conflict to receive benefits from the natural resources.

In conclusion, the A3+ wishes to thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his support to regional peace efforts and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. We reiterate that a political solution remains the most viable means of restoring peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. For that reason, we remain fully supportive of the planned revitalization of the Framework and reaffirm our commitment to the independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I extend my gratitude to Special Envoy Huang Xia and Ms. Ntambwe for their briefings. I also welcome Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the representatives of Rwanda and Angola to the meeting.

The Great Lakes region continues to face complex security, humanitarian, human rights and governance challenges. The escalating violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, deadly actions by armed groups, cross-border tensions and the impact of the ongoing crisis in the Sudan remain a concern. Strong regional cooperation remains essential to lasting peace and stability.

Allow me to underscore three key points in that regard.

First, we reiterate our support for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and welcome the progress made towards its revitalization. Its effective implementation will remain crucial for ensuring stability, sustainable development and peace across the region.

The Nairobi and Luanda processes, alongside other regional diplomatic efforts, are central to conflict resolution and, therefore, stability. The ceasefire agreement between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, facilitated under Angola's leadership, is a significant step forward. We urge Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fully implement their commitments, including the disengagement of forces and plan for neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda.

We commend the ongoing engagement of the African Union, other regional and subregional organizations

and the United Nations, while emphasizing the importance of inclusive peacebuilding. Progress must not be undermined by divisive rhetoric or actions that escalate tensions and hinder efforts already made. We urge all States in the region to continue engaging in confidence- and trust-building measures and to work tirelessly to defuse tensions. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all other States in the region must be respected. Any support to armed groups must cease.

Secondly, it is imperative to continue to address the root causes of instability, particularly competition over natural resources and historical grievances. Armed groups significantly benefit from the illegal exploitation of some of the world's most valuable resources and the trade in them. Such natural resources should drive sustainable development but too often continue to fuel conflict and instability. It is important to ensure transparency in the mining sector, including through the Regional Certification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Addressing instability must involve fostering inclusive governance, upholding the rule of law, protecting human rights, and promoting equitable socioeconomic development, including the responsible management of resources. Addressing ethnic tensions, strengthening local institutions, and ensuring equitable opportunities for all communities are also essential foundations for sustainable peace.

Thirdly, the Great Lakes region is experiencing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, marked by widespread displacement, deteriorating security and severe food and health challenges, including the recent outbreak of mpox. Conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has displaced millions, while the crisis in the Sudan has further contributed to regional displacement. The impact of climate change, including recent flooding, has exacerbated those vulnerabilities, leaving tens of millions of people facing acute levels of food insecurity or worse. The mass displacements, sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment and exploitation of children, especially in displacement camps, remain deeply troubling. It is extremely disturbing that the conflict-related sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has more than doubled compared to the same period last year. We condemn those violations and call for thorough investigations to ensure accountability for their perpetrators.

Amid those challenges, regional cooperation for peace and stability is more crucial than ever. We commend the efforts of the humanitarian community and call on all parties to uphold their obligations under international law, particularly international humanitarian law and human rights law. The safety of humanitarian and medical personnel, and unimpeded and sustained access to affected populations, must be ensured. We commend the efforts of Special Envoy Xia and encourage him to continue facilitating dialogue and cooperation among the countries of the region. The Great Lakes region has experienced decades of insecurity, but we remain convinced that a better, peaceful future is possible.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Special Envoy Xia and Ms. Ntambwe, Executive Director of Change Your World, for their briefings. I also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Her Excellency Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner, and the representatives of Angola and Rwanda.

The human security crisis in the Great Lakes region, especially the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, has continued unabated since our last meeting six months ago (see S/PV.9615). The human rights violations and abuses by armed groups have continued. The deteriorating situation in the region has resulted in massive internal displacement and influxes of refugees into neighbouring countries. The recent ceasefire agreement has brought hopes of much-needed relief for the suffering endured by local residents. It is important to create an environment conducive to a sustainable resolution of the conflict, with all the parties engaged in implementing the agreement sincerely. Comprehensive dialogue is key, and we again commend Angola's leading mediation role in the efforts to find common grounds for regional peace. We must continue to support the Luanda process. Building on that positive development, the signatory countries should fulfil the collective commitments inscribed in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region at the national, regional and international levels. The adoption of a draft action plan for the revitalization of the Framework is encouraging and should bring renewed momentum with concrete follow-up action. Support of any kind by any States to armed groups in the region will only exacerbate the instability on the ground, heighten tensions and mean more suffering for the population. It

clearly violates one of the main commitments under the Framework and must be stopped immediately. Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is fundamental to ensuring a peaceful neighbourhood.

A process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is essential to sustainably reducing the threats posed by armed groups and demands a painstaking and comprehensive national and regional approach based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which is also a clear demand that we heard from Ms. Ntambwe. In that regard, we welcome the launch of the subregional working group on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration. Through the working group, each DDR national authority should take a coordinated approach in order to successfully achieve the repatriation and reintegration of former combatants to their countries of origin. We commend the initiative of Special Envoy Xia to facilitate the formation of the working group and look forward to his further contribution to confidence-building.

We must also address the lingering issue of armed groups' financial resources if we are to degrade their activities in the long run. All actors, downstream and upstream, should contribute to improving transparency and traceability in the life cycle of natural resources in order to counter illicit exploitation and trade. Regional arrangements, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, should continue to play a vital role in promoting responsible resource management with the help of the Office of the Special Envoy.

Establishing regional peace requires strong political will and tangible action on the part of all stakeholders. Japan will continue to play its part in working for a peaceful and prosperous Great Lakes region.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Special Envoy Xia for his briefing and express the United Kingdom's support for the work of the Special Envoy and his Office in support of peace in the region. I also thank Ms. Ntambwe for her briefing and welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Kayikwamba Wagner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the representatives of Rwanda and Angola, in this meeting.

The United Kingdom welcomed the August ceasefire agreement, achieved thanks to the continued and dedicated mediation efforts of President Lourenço of Angola. We now call on the parties to seize this opportunity to produce detailed action plans outlining

how and when the commitments made under the Luanda process will be met, and to begin their implementation. During his recent visits to Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, the United Kingdom Minister for Africa and the United Nations, Lord Collins of Highbury, stressed the importance of all parties engaging in political dialogue. We are concerned about the reports of ceasefire violations while negotiations continue. The ceasefire must be respected. The United Kingdom calls on all parties to the conflict, including non-State actors, to commit to de-escalation.

In June the United Kingdom hosted a high-level round table at Wilton Park on mutual prosperity in Africa's Great Lakes region, in partnership with Special Envoy Xia, the Netherlands and Switzerland. It brought together stakeholders from around the region to discuss practical steps to improve economic integration, promote confidence and build momentum towards peace. The potential areas of cooperation include harmonizing standards, formalizing informal trading networks, improving infrastructure and supporting female traders. The event was a timely reminder of the huge opportunities for regional economic integration that could be unlocked by a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We will continue to take that work forward through the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region.

Finally, the United Kingdom is concerned about disease outbreaks across the region, including mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Marburg virus disease in Rwanda. The United Kingdom is working to support the World Health Organization and national Governments in tackling those outbreaks. Regional conflict saps national capacity and resources and limits inter-State cooperation, making it more difficult to deal with epidemics.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Envoy Xia for his briefing, and Ms. Ntambwe for the moving testimony that she shared with us today. I also welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the representatives of Rwanda and Angola in this meeting.

The Great Lakes region is facing unprecedented challenges. In addition to food insecurity, outbreaks of diseases such as mpox and cholera are a cause for grave concern. Serious human rights violations and abuses, as well as persistent breaches of international

humanitarian law, continue to exacerbate the suffering of civilians across the region. Moreover, despite the fact that the region is one of Africa's wealthiest areas in terms of natural resources, its people continue to struggle to meet their most basic needs. Malta welcomes all efforts to foster concrete and sustainable partnerships, including through the work of the Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals and the European Union's Global Gateway Initiative.

The Security Council recently adopted resolution 2746(2024), authorizing the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in protecting the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reaffirm our strong support for President Lourenço's leadership in facilitating the ceasefire agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We also call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law, ensuring that civilians, especially women and children, are protected from the impact of conflict. We urge both countries to adhere to their commitments.

The proliferation of armed groups, coupled with foreign interference and the use of advanced military technologies, is inherently undermining to the Luanda process. We echo the Secretary-General's call on all signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region to honour their obligations under it. The international community and the Council must clearly reaffirm that dialogue remains the only viable solution.

Malta also welcomes the efforts of subregional organizations to revitalize the Nairobi process. They include the convening of the East African Community's summit to revive the process, in coordination with the Luanda process. We also commend the work of Kenya's former President Kenyatta for his outreach and commitment. The United Nations, including Special Envoy Xia, plays a critical role in complementing those peace initiatives. We support Mr. Xia's steadfast efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda in the region by integrating gender perspectives and ensuring women's participation in regional peace and political processes and agreements. We welcome the development of the Great Lakes regional gender barometer, supported by the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Population Fund, which aims to address gender gaps

and enhance accountability for commitments to gender equality and women and peace and security. Malta also commends the efforts to promote regional judicial cooperation in the fight against impunity, which should remain a priority at the national and regional levels, along with durable solutions to forced displacement.

Journalists, activists and civil society must be able to work in a safe and just civic space. We reiterate our call on the countries of the Great Lakes region to uphold freedom of speech and the media.

In conclusion, since this is the last time that Malta will be taking the floor on the subject of the Great Lakes prior to the end of our term on the Council, I would like to thank Special Envoy Xia and his team for all their efforts. Collaboration through subregional organizations and the United Nations demonstrates the international community's collective endeavour to address the pressing challenges in the region. Malta also reaffirms its commitment to amplifying the voices of the women and young people of the Great Lakes region, who are at the forefront of national and local efforts towards peace and security.

Mr. Fu Cong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome the presence at today's meeting of Her Excellency Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and of the Permanent Representatives of Angola and Rwanda. I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing. I also listened attentively to Ms. Ntambwe's statement.

For some time now, the countries of the Great Lakes region have actively pursued peace, security and development, giving new impetus to the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. At the same time, the region is still facing multiple challenges, including continued violent conflicts and significant humanitarian crises. The international community should support those countries in strengthening their solidarity and cooperation so as to build a common future.

The first step is to strengthen dialogue and reconciliation and stay committed to peaceful coexistence. The countries in the Great Lakes region live side by side, with common interests and a shared future. Resolving differences through dialogue and consultation and achieving good-neighbourliness are acts that serve every country's long-term, fundamental interests. We hope that the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and Rwanda will maintain the momentum of their dialogue and reach a peace agreement soon with a view to finding a political solution to the issue of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We highly value the efforts of the leaders of the countries of the region, including Angola and South Sudan, to promote peace, and we appreciate Special Envoy Huang Xia's diplomatic mediation. China reaffirms its support for the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security and is ready to continue to play a positive role to promote peace and stability in the region.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2024/700) notes that the countries of the region unanimously believe that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remains the most comprehensive mechanism for charting a way forward for durable peace, stability and mutual prosperity. China wishes every success for the upcoming session of the summit of the Framework's Regional Oversight Mechanism, to be held in Uganda, and expects the parties to seize that opportunity to build greater consensus and become partners on the road to peace and development.

The second step is to work together to address challenges and maintain common security. The countries of the region have made joint efforts to combat armed groups and strengthen border and defence cooperation, while the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has actively protected civilians. Those efforts deserve our recognition. We urge all armed groups in the region to abide by the spirit of the ceasefire agreement, to silence the guns, stop the violence and maintain the momentum of de-escalation. All the parties concerned should honour their commitments under the frameworks of the Rwanda and Nairobi processes and refrain from supporting any armed groups. With the support of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Contact and Coordination Group launched its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) working group in August. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries are also actively advancing DDR programmes. The international community should provide them with financial and technical support to help more ex-combatants secure livelihoods and return to normal life.

The third step is to alleviate the humanitarian crisis and promote common development. As a result of the

protracted conflict, the spread of the mpox epidemic and serious food-security problems, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan have seen a high concentration of displaced persons. The international community, particularly developed countries, should honour its aid commitments and close the humanitarian emergency funding gap as soon as possible in order to help more refugees return home. Meanwhile, the countries of the region have recently strengthened their bilateral cooperation on economy, trade, infrastructure and connectivity, leveraging their resources and demographic dividends to increase economic growth. The international community should support them in their legitimate exploitation of natural resources to enable them to continue to improve their people's livelihoods and should increase technology transfers and applications in order to enhance their independent development capacity, with a view to eliminating the breeding grounds for recurring conflicts.

China has always been a staunch supporter and companion of Africa on its road to modernization. At the Beijing summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held last month, China proposed 10 partnership actions covering a wide range of areas, including security and development. Among those actions, China announced the granting of duty-free treatment to 100 per cent of the tariff lines of products from least developed countries, which will provide African countries, including those in the Great Lakes region, with a wider market and more development opportunities. We are ready to work with the international community to contribute more to lasting peace, development and prosperity in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for his report (S/2024/700). I also thank the representative of civil society for her briefing. I acknowledge the presence of the representatives of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola in the Chamber.

The deterioration of the security situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is evidence that the agreements reached have not been fully implemented. The territorial expansion of the Mouvement du 23 mars has not ceased, and the attacks of the Allied Democratic Forces have exacerbated an already worrisome humanitarian crisis.

Against that background, it is essential that the commitments made in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region be revitalized, in particular with regard to respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-tolerance of armed groups. Ecuador supports the efforts of the President of Angola to reach a peace agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The Luanda and Nairobi processes remain the best alternatives for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The levels that the humanitarian crisis in the region has reached are some of the most serious in the world. More than 20.5 million people are internally displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the region. More than 600 people are reported to have died during recent months owing to the activity of armed groups. Reports of human rights violations and sexual and gender-based violence, especially in camps of internally displaced persons, are alarming. It is critical that the ceasefire be respected and that humanitarian assistance in the region be maintained in accordance with the needs on the ground.

Addressing the underlying causes of conflict is what is required. The illegal exploitation of resources continues to be one of the main drivers of violence in the region. State control over the entire territory is necessary to sustainably and transparently manage natural resources. International cooperation is essential to regulate and promote fair and responsible trade. It is also necessary to strengthen strategic communication to counteract disinformation and the spread of intercommunal hate speech.

At the same time, we stress the importance of continuing to involve women and youth in peace processes. The full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in conflict resolution, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), is fundamental to achieve lasting peace.

This is the last time that Ecuador will have the opportunity to address this file, and I would therefore like to encourage the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, to continue his good offices to strengthen the relationships between the signatories of the Framework Agreement and to promote its revitalization. His work in support of the Regional Oversight Mechanism — 13+4 — provided for in the Framework is also essential.

I stress the importance of strengthening the efforts led by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda through programmes with a gender perspective and actions to combat conflict-related sexual violence.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Xia and Ms. Ntambwe for their briefings. I would also like to welcome Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the representatives of Rwanda and Angola to this meeting.

The United States remains deeply concerned about the continuing conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the risk of it spreading into a wider regional war. We strongly condemn the staggering level of criminality and violence wrought against the region's civilian populations, including human rights violations and abuses, unlawful use of child soldiers by armed groups and conflict-related sexual violence.

We have said it before, and we will say it again: there is no military solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is why we support African-led diplomatic efforts to bring peace to the Great Lakes region. That includes the Luanda process, led by Angolan President João Lourenço, and the Nairobi process, led by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta. We must do all we can to invigorate those efforts. There is no time to spare.

The United States welcomes the open-ended ceasefire in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which Angola announced on 30 July and began on 4 August. Now Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo must implement their commitments under the Luanda process and take meaningful steps on the ground to deliver peace. The parties must take those steps because the civilian populations of the region are suffering. Tragically, the Democratic Republic of the Congo now has nearly 7 million internally displaced persons countrywide, many as a result of the fighting between the United Nations-sanctioned Mouvement du 23 mars, Rwandan troops and other armed State and non-State actors.

The United States has provided more than \$893 million in humanitarian assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in fiscal year 2024 through the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development and

via international organization and non-governmental organization partners.

We call on all parties to grant access to comprehensive services for those affected by the conflict, especially survivors of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. We also call on the international community to mobilize additional resources to bolster the work of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. And we call on Governments to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses committed in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the broader Great Lakes region.

As a means of ensuring accountability, the United States will continue to pursue sanctions against individuals and entities who threaten peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge Member States to join us in that process.

Finally, we will continue to work closely with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Angola, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners to support regional diplomatic efforts under the Luanda and Nairobi processes to end the violence and reach a durable cessation of hostilities. We simply cannot afford the risk of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo spreading into a regional conflict.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Special Envoy Huang Xia and Ms. Ntambwe for their comprehensive briefings. I also welcome Foreign Minister Kayikwamba Wagner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the representatives of Rwanda and Angola to today's meeting.

While it is encouraging to see developments regarding the 30 July ceasefire agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, facilitated by President Lorenzo of Angola, the situation in the Great Lakes region continues to remain volatile, marked by the proliferation of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and heightened bilateral tensions that risk triggering a broader regional conflict.

Against that backdrop, I would like to highlight three points.

First, it is vital that all involved States continue diplomatic engagement to defuse tensions and find political solutions to the ongoing conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on the

Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to make progress in the implementation of their commitments to neutralize the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and disengage forces. Korea reaffirms its support for the Luanda and Nairobi processes and emphasizes the need to harmonize efforts by regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States. We also welcome recent progress in revitalizing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The upcoming twelfth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to be held in Uganda, is a crucial opportunity to address the root causes of conflict and pave the way for durable peace, stability and mutual prosperity in the Great Lakes region.

Secondly, Korea strongly condemns the actions of armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and urges their immediate disarmament and withdrawal from occupied territories. All support to those groups must stop. In that regard, the efforts of the Contact and Coordination Group and its operational cell on non-military measures to address armed groups are notable. We call on all concerned countries to enhance cooperation in the demobilization and repatriation of foreign ex-combatants as a means of building mutual confidence and trust.

The illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources show an undeniable link with the instability and persistent tensions in the region. We call for enhanced measures to strengthen relevant national regulatory and law enforcement capacities so as to ensure the effective and transparent management of those resources.

Thirdly, Korea stresses the importance of inclusive participation of women and youth in regional peace process dialogues. Their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation creates spaces and platforms for community perspectives, thus genuinely contributing to the attainment of durable peace and security.

In the meanwhile, we are deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the alarming levels of sexual and gender-based violence in the region, particularly in and around internally displaced persons camps. We demand an immediate end to all such violence and call for humanitarian assistance

to be accessible and responsive to the specific needs of women and girls. Respect for humanitarian and human rights law is fundamental and violators must be held accountable.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its unwavering support for Special Envoy Huang Xia and the relevant regional organizations and remains committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to promote sustainable peace and stability in the region.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing. We listened attentively to the statement delivered by Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe. We welcome the participation of Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as that of the representatives of Rwanda and Angola in this meeting.

We have been closely following developments in the Great Lakes region, particularly the grave situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the results of the second meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, achieved thanks to the active participation of the President of Angola, Mr. João Lourenço. The announcement of an indefinite ceasefire starting at midnight of 4 August was a meaningful step forward. We hope that direct and open dialogue between the parties, with Angolan mediation, will make it possible to reach a lasting and viable political solution to the crisis. A long-term agreement is a genuine opportunity to prevent the further exacerbation of the standoff between regional States and the degradation of the subregional cooperation architecture. This is an opportunity we simply cannot squander.

On the contrary, it is critical to maintain the positive momentum and reaffirm the commitment to uphold mutual obligations on the diplomatic track. Such efforts should incorporate concrete steps to end any interaction between the State and illegal armed groups. Unless that is achieved, the subregion is liable to relapse into another armed conflict involving the Movement du 23 mars and other armed groups. As we know, that would trigger yet another wave of humanitarian suffering, amplifying the unchecked exploitation of Congo's natural resources. There is no doubt that such a scenario runs counter to the core interests of the countries of the region.

We must also support other regional efforts to put the situation back on track to peace, specifically the Nairobi process, under the auspices of the East African Community. This independent track offers an opportunity to find solutions to issues that must be addressed. Otherwise, it would be extremely difficult to achieve comprehensive stabilization in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also support the efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its leadership to ensure peace and the protection of civilians. The presence of Blue Helmets in the conflict zone remains an important deterrent.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is also making an important contribution to stabilizing the situation. The SADC contingent, with United Nations support on the ground, should facilitate a balanced and constructive search for political compromises, rather than military solutions.

At the same time, we hope that the States of the region will remain committed to the comprehensive implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. We welcome their determination to revitalize that fundamental document. We support the activities of Special Envoy Huang Xia to facilitate this comprehensive work, and we note his efforts to reduce tensions in the subregion.

The Russian Federation, in turn, will continue to support constructive dialogue between the countries of the Great Lakes region in order to come up with thoughtful long-term solutions to regional problems.

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

Like my colleagues, I would like to thank the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for his presentation and for his valuable work. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe for her valuable contribution and engagement in a difficult context. I also welcome the representatives of the States of the region, including the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As the Special Envoy underscored today, peace and security in the region can only be achieved through cooperation and the restoration of mutual trust. The

proliferation of armed State actors and military technologies in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has exacerbated regional tensions, increasing the risk of a larger-scale conflict. In the light of the continuing suffering of the civilian population and the recurrent violations of international law, we must redouble our efforts to find viable political solutions and prevent an escalation of the conflict.

I would like to raise three points in that regard.

First, a political solution remains the only viable path to lay the foundations for lasting peace in the region. There is an urgent need to put an end to the escalation of tensions. Switzerland welcomes regional initiatives in that respect and supports the Luanda process. The ceasefire agreement, signed on 30 July by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, represents a significant step forward that has already led to a reduction in clashes. The agreement must be respected and the commitments made fully honoured.

As Ms. Kyabu Ntambwe noted, regional processes must also guarantee the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. That is an essential condition for lasting peace, and we welcome the efforts undertaken by President Lourenço and the Special Envoy in that regard. The High-Level Regional Forum of Women of the Great Lakes Region, scheduled for 18 and 19 October in Luanda, represents a significant opportunity to strengthen their participation in peace processes. Switzerland is working with the women's delegations in support of their participation.

Secondly, the civilian population must be protected at all times, and the rights of all civilians must be respected. The violence perpetrated by all parties to the conflict has led to an alarming humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes, making this region one of the most affected by forced displacement. The repercussions of the crisis are particularly devastating for women and girls, who, as Ms. Kyabu Ntambwe so aptly pointed out, are enduring extreme forms of sexual violence and exploitation. This situation is intolerable. Furthermore, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the intensification of hostilities has made children significantly more vulnerable. Switzerland therefore once again calls on all parties to immediately cease all violations of international law.

Finally, it is crucial that the States of the region work together to address the root causes of the conflict. In the past few months, clashes between

armed actors over the exploitation of and illicit trade in natural resources have intensified. That dynamic fuels hostilities and undermines peace efforts in the Great Lakes region. In that respect, we are particularly concerned about armed groups seizing mining areas, as the Mouvement du 23 mars has done at Rubaya. It is therefore imperative to strengthen the transparent governance of natural resources and combat illegal activities that fuel conflicts. We encourage countries of transit and destination for minerals to commit to ensuring responsible supply chains, in particular by improving mineral traceability.

Peace has not yet been won, but there are real opportunities to do it in the Great Lakes region today. The Security Council must therefore fully assume its role in supporting the States of the region in the quest for lasting solutions. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remains an essential instrument for stability and deserves to be revitalized. For its part, Switzerland will remain firmly committed to supporting regional initiatives and promoting peace and stability in the region, both through its representatives in the Great Lakes region and in multilateral forums.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on the Swiss Confederation's presidency of the Security Council, and to express my delegation's pleasure at seeing your country guide our deliberations for the month of October. I salute the tireless efforts of His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My thanks also go to Ambassador Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and my compatriot, Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe, for her disturbing account.

My presence here today is a reminder of the Council's sacred obligation to maintain international peace and security. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, like every Member State of our Organization, must benefit from the same consideration. Yet the crisis that persists in the east of my country, orchestrated and fuelled by external forces, is jeopardizing that peace,

not only for us, the Congolese people, but for the entire region, and by extension it is damaging global stability. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2024/700) is unequivocal. It highlights a deteriorating security situation, growing tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and a tragic humanitarian crisis. The report calls for urgent action and a diplomatic leap to restore peace and address the population's suffering. After 12 years, it is clear that meetings and reports have not led to any concrete progress.

This crisis is not a simple accident of history. The Congolese people have endured untold suffering for almost three decades, and the mechanisms put in place to restore peace, such as the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, have failed, thanks to the bad faith of some individuals. Even though the Agreement was unbalanced from the start, the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed it in the hope of bringing peace to the people. We have taken respect for our commitments seriously, but we are still waiting for the other signatories, especially those that have violated their commitments without consequences, to be finally held accountable by the Council with the necessary firmness and clarity. We welcomed the adoption on 21 June of a draft action plan for the revitalization of the Framework, as mentioned in paragraph 52 of the Secretary-General's report. The plan will be considered at the twelfth high-level summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism by Heads of State before its validation, as specified in the report. Once again, we expect to see real action and not empty promises.

The situation on the ground is alarming, and the figures on the humanitarian disaster in the east of my country are overwhelming. Almost 7 million Congolese people are currently displaced, living in conditions of total destitution, making the Democratic Republic of the Congo the country with the largest numbers of internally displaced people in the world. The report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo confirms the presence of more than 4,000 soldiers of the Rwanda Defence Force on Congolese soil, which is more than the number of Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) troops. Rwanda, a United Nations troop-contributing country, is thereby interfering in the affairs of its neighbours with impunity and in flagrant violation of international law. The interference

is accompanied by a series of illegitimate manoeuvres aimed at restructuring local administration in the occupied areas, in particular through the appointment of traditional authorities imposed by the M23 and supported by Rwanda. The groups are seeking to alter demographic and cultural balances, particularly in the Rutshuru Territory. Such acts undermine the autonomy of the Congolese State and establish a parallel administration, dividing communities. Moreover, population transfers are reported under the guise of refugee movements, which we firmly reject. The return of displaced persons and refugees must and will be supervised solely by the Congolese State, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to guarantee voluntary and dignified returns.

The Luanda process, initiated in 2022 to respond to the crisis, exposes the limits of the Framework Agreement's ability to guarantee the signatories' full responsibility. We have deliberately avoided divulging the details of the Luanda process in the public space and the media, out of respect for the mediator and the human lives at stake, and in order to guarantee calm negotiations. However, it is now clear that, given the urgency of the situation, it is our duty to clarify before the Council the real obstacles that are slowing the process and the adoption of the draft peace agreement proposed by the Angolan mediators.

The first is the harmonized plan for the neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the disengagement of forces. The plan is based on two parts, one for the neutralization of the FDLR and the other for the withdrawal of the Rwandan forces. As early as April, the Democratic Republic of the Congo developed its plan to neutralize the FDLR with precision, including a comprehensive threat assessment, military operations and the rigorous monitoring of results. In contrast, Rwanda's contribution amounts to a simple pledge to withdraw its forces, with no concrete guarantees or details, creating an imbalance that undermines the consistent implementation of the plan. Worse still, Rwanda makes its withdrawal conditional on the neutralization of the FDLR, a form of blackmail that violates the fundamental principles of international law. For the process to make sense, it is imperative that both parts be implemented simultaneously, which is the only way that we can ensure the credibility and effectiveness of a plan that aspires to restore peace in the region.

Secondly, Rwanda rejects any clauses of responsibility in a possible peace agreement, which raises serious doubts about the sincerity of its commitment to peace. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we fully accept being held accountable for our actions, because the principle of responsibility is the basis of any conflict resolution. It requires each party to scrupulously respect its commitments with rigour and sincerity. When an agreement is violated, that principle demands clear and unequivocal consequences, whether in the form of sanctions or judicial action, so that justice and international law are not mere words but realities. Without responsibility, there can be no confidence or durable peace.

Third and finally, the Democratic Republic of the Congo reaffirms the imperative need for a regional justice mechanism to address the flagrant violations of international law committed since the M23's resurgence in 2022. Rwanda has categorically rejected the inclusion of any provisions aimed at integrating such a mechanism into the peace agreement currently under discussion. That stubborn refusal plainly reveals Rwanda's intention to evade the light of justice.

As regards the illegal exploitation of my country's natural resources, my Government is demanding the immediate imposition of stringent sanctions on all involved in that chain of plunder, from producers to exploiters. We also call for the introduction of a mechanism similar to the Kimberley Process to handle gold from conflict zones, in order to put an end to a parallel economy that is fuelling violence. My Government, which endorses the recommendations of the Khartoum workshop of 2 September 2021 on natural resources in the Great Lakes region, stands ready to play an active part in discussions on the introduction of such a process so as to eradicate that scourge.

Lastly, I welcome the initiative that came out of the meeting of 1 October at the United Nations and is aimed at accelerating the operationalization of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme for the reintegration of members of armed groups. We reiterate our call for substantial support for the programme, given the challenges posed by foreign armed groups. It is essential that each country in the region assume its responsibilities, as the Democratic Republic of Congo is doing, by establishing national mechanisms to deal with the issue of armed groups on its own territory so that they return to their home countries, thereby

relieving the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and its civilian population in particular, of a burden that has been borne for too long. We also request that the Council task the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region with providing a detailed report on that specific issue.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a peace-loving nation. We have chosen a path of dialogue, multilateralism and adherence to international law. We cannot, however, countenance the sacrifice of our sovereignty and territorial integrity at the altar of inaction and impunity. We urge the Council to take firm measures by imposing targeted sanctions on the Rwandan individuals who head the chain of command and are supporting the M23. The reports that we all have before us highlight their direct role in the attacks on Congolese territory, including on internally displaced persons camps, and their coordination with armed groups. We therefore call for the sanctions to include travel bans, assets freezes and economic measures so as to end the destabilizing interference that is threatening regional peace and security. The Security Council must energetically reassert the fundamental principles that form the bedrock of our heritage of multilateralism — justice, accountability and peace.

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

Mr. Rwamucyo (Rwanda): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Madam President, on your presidency and your able stewardship of the Council. I thank the Special Envoy, His Excellency Mr. Huang Xia, for his comprehensive briefing, and I acknowledge Ms. Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe and thank her for her work and comprehensive briefing this morning. I also acknowledge the presence here today of Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the representative of Angola. And I am grateful to the representatives of Member States and the Council members who spoke before me.

I would like to begin by reaffirming Rwanda's commitment to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed in February 2013 by 13 countries and four international and regional institutions, including the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community.

The Framework was envisioned as a beacon of hope for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We believed that its full implementation would end the recurring cycle of conflict, address the root causes of instability and foster trust among neighbours. Yet more than a decade later, we find ourselves confronting the same issues that the Framework was designed to resolve. The scorecard on implementation reveals significant gaps, with several key challenges and bottlenecks hindering progress. In Rwanda's view, the hopes of 2013 have yet to be fully realized a decade later. The ceasefire between the warring parties, and the Luanda process led by President João Lourenço of Angola, are good first steps that need to be backed by concrete action and strong commitment on the part of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the Framework outlined the path towards peace and stability, the reality on the ground has told a different story. Key components of the Framework, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups, remain unimplemented or insufficiently addressed. What is worse, some of the critical root causes of the conflict, including ethnic persecution and the presence of illegal foreign armed groups such as the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), continue to fuel instability in the region.

The mushrooming of the illegal armed groups that have found sanctuary in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is a critical challenge to peace in our region. The FDLR, a genocidal militia composed of perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, is the longest-standing foreign armed group in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The FDLR and its splinter groups are at the centre of the conflict in that country and are pivotal to the creation and existence of several other armed groups. Some Mai-Mai armed groups were born to support it and have become its proxies, such as Nyatura and its splinter groups, the Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO) and others. Over the past three decades, the FDLR has been consistently committing ethnic cleansing, sexual violence and large-scale human rights violations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its neutralization and complete disengagement from the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) is key to a sustainable solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

More threatening is the FDLR's genocidal ideology, which has permeated the Congolese population and is shared by its proxies, such as Nyatura, PARECO, various Wazalendo groups and allied Burundian groups in the conflict. I want to emphasize that the debate about the number of FDLR troops is misleading. A single radical element imbued with the ideology of genocide and terrorism is a threat, let alone thousands operating with the support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and fighting alongside the Burundian armed forces, the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, European mercenaries and other armed groups in which the FDLR is embedded. While we continue to try to pull in the same direction for the successful implementation of the Luanda process and the revitalization of the Nairobi process, there can be no tangible results if that evil force is not systematically dismantled and expelled from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Despite being designated as a terrorist organization, the FDLR continues to thrive thanks to continued support and financing from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to United Nations reports, the FDLR generates millions of dollars annually from illicit activities, including mineral exploitation, the timber and charcoal trade, illegal tax collection, agriculture and other businesses. That money is being funnelled to FARDC officers and local leaders, creating an economy of conflict that undermines peace efforts and perpetuates violence. That trend must be addressed, and we call on the Council to hold all involved accountable.

Another fundamental issue hampering the full realization of the Framework is the continued persecution of Congolese Tutsi communities. Hate speech, exclusion, discrimination and violence against that community must be addressed as a component of any sustainable solution. The Framework cannot achieve its intended goal if certain groups continue to be marginalized and killed for being who they are. Addressing that is not only a human rights obligation but a step towards fostering national unity and reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, the plight of Congolese refugees must be confronted as part of a holistic peace and security strategy. Sustainable peace will remain elusive unless we ensure that Congolese refugees and displaced populations can return to their homes safely and with dignity. That requires comprehensive measures that

address the root causes of displacement and ensure that refugees are not left behind in the peace process.

The Nairobi process and the Luanda road map are steps in the right direction, but without a genuine commitment to inter-Congolese dialogue, the cycle of conflict will continue. Only through inclusive and transparent dialogue — one that brings all stakeholders to the table, including marginalized communities — can the Democratic Republic of the Congo break free from its troubled past. We must foster a dialogue that addresses grievances, promotes justice and builds trust among all Congolese citizens. It must be recalled that the Luanda process alone cannot solve the Democratic Republic of the Congo's problems without complementing it with the Nairobi process in an inclusive manner. That was loudly stated in the Security Council.

I want to take this opportunity to shed light on the minerals issue, as it was raised in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2024/689) and some Council members also raised it this morning. The issue of mineral exploitation is a red herring dangled to distract from the real issues and root causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I want to state here that it is rather puzzling that the Rubaya mine site, in the territory currently controlled by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), is now being given particular attention, especially given the fact that it was previously exploited by PARECO and its splinter groups — *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo*, FDLR and Burundians — with minerals being smuggled across the border of Burundi. At that time, there was no global outrage. Associating minerals with the M23 is a diversion from the root causes of the conflict and is demeaning to the political claims of the Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The only way to address the illegal exploitation of minerals in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is to put in place the infrastructure, laws and trade regulations, all of which cannot see the light of the day without peace. Let us value and commit to the most crucial element of any societal and economic transformation, which is peace. And I mean peace in capital letters.

Before I conclude, I would like to highlight and emphasize four key facts that go to the heart of resolving the current conflict from the perspective of my country, Rwanda.

First, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has to own up to the crisis. It must deal with its own internal contradictions and contestation with its own citizens. The M23, whose members are largely Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese and are Congolese citizens. The Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot ignore or run away from that fact. The grievances they have that forced them to fight for their rights are with their Government, that is, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I want to emphasize here that the current M23 members did not come to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from Rwanda. They came from Uganda. The facts are that the M23 group that went to Rwanda after its defeat in 2013 was disarmed and cantoned in eastern Rwanda close to the Rwanda-Tanzania border, which is hundreds of kilometres away from the border between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And that was deliberately done to ensure that its members were very far from the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so that there was no risk of them destabilizing their country. Their arms were officially handed over to the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government. That is also a fact that is on record. How then does that become a Rwanda problem? The Democratic Republic of the Congo must stop externalizing that problem to Rwanda and must take full ownership and leadership in resolving its own internal crisis.

Secondly, the Security Council, as the custodian of global and regional peace and security, must be seriously concerned and indeed alarmed by the amassing of foreign fighters in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since the conflict re-emerged, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has run from country to country mobilizing fighters and military support to fight its own citizens, the members of the M23. Today eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has a cocktail of European and other mercenaries — and I mean paid mercenaries. It has its Burundian troops, and it has its Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo troops drawn from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi. One wonders whether that is helping to find a lasting solution or aggravating an already dire conflict and jeopardizing any efforts to find a lasting solution. As Council members already stated, there is no military solution to the conflict; there is only a political solution.

Therefore, for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as a State actor, to resort to the hiring of foreign

mercenaries, amassing foreign troops and undertaking State-orchestrated proliferation of arms to unruly militia dubbed Wazalendo, who have committed human rights violations, including rape and sexual violence; and FDLR génocidaires, all with the aim of fighting its own Kinyarwanda-speaking community, whose only demands of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government are the protection of their inherent citizenship rights, their human rights and the right to live in peace and decently on their ancestral lands, is a matter that the Council must call out and condemn.

Thirdly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must disengage with the FDLR, a genocidal terrorist armed group that poses an existential threat to Rwanda. The FDLR and its splinter groups are currently embedded with the Congolese army — the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo — and are armed and supported by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It must resolve that and completely disengage with FDLR and remove the threat to a neighbour in order to guarantee lasting peace and good neighbourliness. That is at the core of the Rwanda process.

Fourthly, Rwanda is fully committed to improving relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We mean that genuinely, honestly and seriously. We recognize that good relations between our two countries are in the best interests of our peoples and the region. The Great Lakes region has great potential. Our people are interconnected geographically, culturally and in terms of infrastructure, so there is a lot to gain when there is peace among us. However, those relations will succeed only if we all own the regional processes — that is, the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Rwanda has consistently demonstrated its willingness to engage constructively. And we believe that, with total commitment to the Luanda and Nairobi processes, we can pave the way for a more peaceful and cooperative future. In simpler terms, Rwanda believes that there is no military solution, as I said, to what is a political problem.

In conclusion, Rwanda remains completely committed to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. With the right actions and renewed commitment from all parties, we believe the Framework can still deliver on its promise of peace and stability. Rwanda stands ready to support the Special Envoy in all his efforts to bring about lasting peace in the region.

The Great Lakes region has immense potential, as I said, and I continue to emphasize that. And with peace, we can unlock that potential and transform our region into one of the fastest growing regions in Africa.

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

Mr. Luemba (Angola): Allow us to begin by congratulating Switzerland on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. We wish you, Madam President, success in this role. We are convinced that your country's long-standing commitment to world peace will make an important contribution to further strengthening the role of the Security Council in advancing its global peace and security agenda. We acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also acknowledge with satisfaction the presence of His Excellency Mr. Ernest Rwamucyo, Permanent Representative of Rwanda, in this meeting. We would like to thank Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/700) and for his tireless efforts in the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region. We also commend his efforts to meet regional leaders in order to promote dialogue and support regional peace initiatives. In addition, I extend our appreciation to Ms. Sarah Ntambwe, Executive Director of Change Your World, for her compelling remarks.

The report before us today examines the major political, peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region and indicates that during the period under review, the overall security situation in parts of the Great Lakes region has further deteriorated. However, it also recognizes regional peace initiatives undertaken by leaders in the region through high-level political engagement with a view to restoring trust and promoting peace and stability in the region, including through the Luanda and Nairobi processes.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, with 13 signatory countries and four international organizations acting as guarantors of the Framework, remains the most comprehensive tool at our disposal

to address the broader security situation and to attain long-term peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

In that regard, we note with appreciation that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to implement its national commitments and Member States continued to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation. Additionally, the guarantor institutions continued their engagements under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. We welcome all efforts towards the revitalization of the Framework, including the elaboration of a draft action plan for consideration by the Heads of State during the twelfth high-level summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

The Republic of Angola attaches particular importance to the implementation of the results of the quadripartite summit comprised by the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community, aimed at coordinating and harmonizing actions and initiatives for peace in the region. Additional steps were taken at various levels. Equally important is monitoring the progress made in the implementation of the agreed commitments.

Furthermore, we reiterate our serious concern about the situation in the Sudan, where a violent war is raging, with humanitarian consequences of dramatic proportions in the face of a certain apathy on the part of the international community, which must seek to pool efforts and act in coordination with the African Union to promote and achieve lasting peace in that country.

The Republic of Angola reiterates its concern about the persistent instability in the Great Lakes region, particularly the continuing deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The increase in military activities carried out by the Movement du 23 mars and other armed groups, including their occupation of new areas, constitutes a serious and flagrant violation of the Luanda and Nairobi processes, thus undermining diplomatic efforts and initiatives for peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Nevertheless, we remain committed to actively contributing to reaching a political and diplomatic solution aimed at achieving sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, as evidenced in President Lourenço's address at the

general debate of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly. In fact, in his capacity as African Union Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa and Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, has spared no effort in undertaking a series of diplomatic initiatives centred at promoting peace and stability, reducing political tension in the region and re-establishing an atmosphere of trust between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda through the Luanda process.

We are highly encouraged by the commitment and confidence shown by His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, in the Luanda process as a mechanism for reaching a political solution to the instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The political and high-level engagement undertaken within the scope of the Luanda process was outlined before the Security Council last week (see S/PV.9736) by His Excellency Mr. Francisco José Da Cruz, the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations. As mentioned, the next ministerial meeting between our two brother countries is scheduled to take place in Luanda within the next couple of days, with the aim of reaching an understanding leading to a summit of Heads of State that could seal definitive peace and the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two brother countries.

In Angola's view, it is important that we continue to focus our diplomatic efforts and actions to consolidate the progress made in the process thus far. We would therefore like to express our gratitude for the support of the countries of the region, regional and international organizations and, particularly, the confidence demonstrated by the members of the Council in the Luanda and Nairobi processes.

We also take this opportunity to welcome all relevant initiatives made under the Nairobi processes, including continued outreach efforts made during the period under review by His Excellency Mr. Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of South Sudan, in his capacity as East African Community Chairperson, and by the Facilitator of the EAC-led Nairobi process and former President of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta. We also

express our appreciation for efforts made by all leaders in the region, at various levels, to defuse tensions and consolidate peace in the region.

In conclusion, the Republic of Angola will continue to prioritize dialogue as one of the main political and diplomatic instruments for reaching a political and sustainable solution to the complex problem in the Great Lakes region.

As His Excellency President João Lourenço stated in his address to General Assembly on 24 September,

“[w]e have learned from our own conflict that there is no peace without dialogue and no peace without concessions on both sides. This is a path that cannot be neglected in the context of all efforts to resolve the serious security crises facing the world today.”

The President (*spoke in French*): The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor to make a brief statement.

Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I will focus on two points, without dwelling on Rwanda's vibrant plea in favour of the Movement du 23 mars (M23).

First, on the allegations of threats against ethnic minorities, we note that our country, which is very diverse, has always been able to protect and ensure the peaceful coexistence and security of all of its groups. The principle of sovereignty means that each State fully manages its internal affairs, and we demand full respect for that principle. Unfortunately, Rwanda is using the false pretext of a feigned altruism towards certain minorities in order to justify its violations of our sovereignty. Decades of Rwandan intervention show that such discourse serves a predatory policy motivated by economic interests in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such speech reflects a profound disregard for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and for the human dignity of Congolese lives, which deserve the same protection as all others.

Secondly, with regard to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), I would like to recall that, over the years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has steadfastly demonstrated its commitment to their neutralization, including through joint operations with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and even with Rwanda. Our commitment to that issue

is unwavering, as we know that the FDLR is causing considerable harm to our own citizens.

Let me conclude by recalling that today the Democratic Republic of the Congo explained to the Council why we insist on including provisions for accountability and justice in any future peace agreement with Rwanda. Contrariwise, what Rwanda has not been able to explain to us today is its contempt for the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, its fear of a peace agreement with an accountability clause that would impose sanctions for violations of that agreement and, finally, its fear of the idea of a justice mechanism to deal with violations of international law since the resurgence of the M23. This crisis has revealed to us a bitter truth, namely, that a single country with bad intentions is enough to start a war. But it takes the sincere will of at least two nations to achieve peace.

The Council must hold all actors accountable for their actions in order to ensure the success of the peace process by placing the United Nations Charter and human dignity at the heart of our efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Rwanda has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor for a brief statement.

Mr. Rwamucyo (Rwanda): I usually do not make a rebuttal, but I wanted to respond on this matter.

First, to be clear, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must stop blaming others for its problems. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has had political and security challenges for decades, many of which even preceded Rwanda's independence. It therefore cannot be Rwanda that is responsible for the problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The time has come for it to take full ownership and to systematically, honestly and genuinely address its own internal problems. Partners can help, but partners cannot take ownership of those problems. Rwanda is not responsible for the existence, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, the Allied Democratic Forces, Zaire, Nyatura and its many splinter groups. We are not responsible for the existence of the Mouvement du 23 mars. As documented in the report of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which was published in December 2023, there are 250 local armed groups and 14 foreign armed groups in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo. Rwanda is not responsible for all of that. It must therefore take responsibility.

On the issue of territorial integrity, we agree that the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo matters. But the territorial integrity of Rwanda also matters. We have never suffered an attack from any of our neighbours. Over the past 30 years, most of the attacks in Rwanda have come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) is responsible for that. Why is the Democratic Republic of the Congo continuing to preserve, support and maintain the FDLR? The solution is simple: disengage and dismantle

the FDLR, which is embedded with its army, and peace will return to the region. That is very important.

I want to call upon the Council to be very clear on this matter: the Democratic Republic of the Congo has to be responsible for the protection of its own citizens. The Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese are Congolese. They deserve equal protection, like any other citizen. This cannot be a Rwanda problem.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.