

## **Peacebuilding Commission**

### **Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on the Great Lakes Region**

**31 October 2022**

#### **Chair's Summary**

1. On 31 October 2022, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting on the Great Lakes region. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on political processes in the region, facilitate a shared understanding of the challenges to peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region, as well as mobilize diplomatic and financial support for flagship initiatives derived from the UN Strategy for Peacebuilding, Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region Action Plan.

2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair welcomed the positive trend of renewed political dialogue and enhanced economic and security cooperation among the countries of the region, and commended the instrumental role of the UN, the East African Community (EAC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), as well as the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for peace and stability in the region. The Chair noted that the continued violence perpetrated by non-state armed groups, the rise in hate speech and discrimination, increased food insecurity, continuing forced displacement, adverse effects of climate change and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic are exacerbating instability and negatively affecting sustainable development in the region, and added that reinvigorated efforts were required to overcome the complex and interrelated challenges. He encouraged the international community to continue its efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Action Plan for the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (UN Regional Strategy). He underlined the PBC's role in supporting the countries in the region in peacebuilding efforts and recalled the PBC written advice on the Great Lakes region to the Security Council in 2022. Further, the Chair acknowledged the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) contributions in support of the national, cross-border and regional peacebuilding initiatives of the region. He underscored the need of additional support to implement the flagship initiatives derived from the UN Regional Strategy's Action Plan.

3. **The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Huang Xia,** noted the further deterioration of the security situation in the Great Lakes region, particularly in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He emphasized that armed groups are one of the greatest threats facing the region, exacerbating mistrust between States as well as aggravating an already dire humanitarian situation with devastating effects on livelihoods and socio-economic development, and therefore jeopardizing the hard-won gains in bilateral and regional cooperation achieved in recent years. He underscored the need to effectively address the root causes of recurrent conflicts in the region, which is one of the guiding principles of the UN Regional Strategy. He informed that the updated UN Regional Strategy Action Plan, which contains 14 flagship initiatives for 2022-2023, addresses major political, security, humanitarian, and development issues in the region and highlighted three flagship initiatives: 1) support for political processes in

the Great Lakes region, namely the Luanda and Nairobi processes, which are critical opportunities to resolve the current crisis in eastern DRC and restore trust between countries in the region; 2) support for the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG) on non-military measures, including dismantling the supply networks of armed groups, preventing the recruitment of young people, and ending the proliferation of weapons; and 3) strengthening the role of civil society organizations, women and youth in political processes and peacebuilding structures in the region. He added that the CCG has made significant strides in recent months, particularly on the deployment of the Task Force, and expressed that the CCG's non-military measures are particularly timely in the context of ongoing regional peace processes. He noted that several other flagship initiatives deserve attention, and that his office will continue further discussions with Member States. Mr. Xia emphasized the need for urgent financial, diplomatic, and technical support to implement the flagship initiatives. He encouraged all partners to work closely together, including the PBC, Member States and the UN, in support of a peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous Great Lakes region.

**4. The Special Envoy of the EAC Facilitator of the Nairobi Process, H.E. Ambassador Macharia Kamau,** provided an update on the EAC-led Nairobi process. He noted with concern the recent security developments in North Kivu which threaten the positive gains made by the region in the context of the EAC. He informed about the complementary two-track approach - political and military - adopted by the countries of the region. In the context of the political track, he noted the current Nairobi process led by the EAC and the Luanda process led by Angola. He provided some background on the Nairobi Conclaves, held in April and June 2022, and informed of a series of consultations as well as dialogues with communities and armed groups in the DRC. Further, the Ambassador expressed the need for the international community to condemn and take firm action against the M23 and other negative forces. He mentioned the importance of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process in parallel to the political track. He recommended that the PBC pays a special interest in working with partners to create a momentum and bring coherence. He mentioned the military track as an effort being undertaken by the defense forces of the East African countries, which have dedicated resources from their own budgets, an indication of their political commitment to resolve the crisis. He concluded by noting that the Nairobi process requires political will to bring peace, and stressed the need for continued political, diplomatic, and financial support from the PBC.

**5. MONUSCO DSRSG and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in the DRC, Mr. Bruno Lemarquis,** noted that despite the progress made and the ongoing political initiatives and processes, the overall security situation in the Great Lakes region remains extremely fragile, with a serious deterioration of the security situation in eastern DRC. He noted that the humanitarian crisis remains one of the longest and most complex in the world, with 5.7 million displaced people in the DRC, and that it requires more attention and funding. He informed of MONUSCO's support to the operations of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), and since the resumption of fighting on 20 October, UN peacekeepers have been mobilized to support the FARDC military effort against the M23. He noted that an increase in activities by other armed groups has also been observed, which poses a threat to the security of the entire region, requiring collective action and cooperation from all actors. He informed that MONUSCO welcomed the East African Community's regional initiative and the deployment of

its first contingent in the DRC, along with the Burundian army in South Kivu, and stressed the importance of close coordination mechanisms among all military mechanisms and MONUSCO. Further, he underlined that the military response is not the solution for lasting peace in eastern DRC, but it remains an essential catalyst for political processes, such as the Nairobi and Luanda processes, which all must encourage. He informed that MONUSCO has provided substantial and operational assistance to the Nairobi and Luanda processes, and that substantial assistance to ongoing peace initiatives will continue. He stressed the inseparable role of the DRC's Community Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Stabilization Programme (P-DDRCS) with the ongoing peace processes and encouraged all regional and international partners to actively support that crucial agenda. Further, he commended the cross-border initiatives funded by the PBF and expressed support for the UN Regional Strategy. He underscored the role of international community in ensuring that initiatives are translated into concrete action and stressed the importance of ensuring full respect by the DRC's neighbors for the principles of international law, including territorial integrity.

**6. Director and Deputy Head of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), Ms. Awa Dabo,** commended the enhanced political and diplomatic outreach by leaders in the region and the UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, and welcomed the EAC-led Nairobi process and Angola's mediation efforts. She informed that the Great Lakes region is a high priority for the PBSO, and that PBSO supports the strong engagement of the PBC with the countries of the Great Lakes region. She noted the positive trend of strengthened regional cooperation, which provides an opportunity for more cross-border investments. She noted that the PBF is committed to cross-border programming as well as national programs that focus on borderland communities and will continue to increase its investments in the region. She informed that the PBF is supporting projects that provide integrated approaches to address the structural causes of insecurity and instability in the region aligned with the UN Regional Strategy, with an active portfolio of more than \$38 million. Ms. Dabo stressed the importance of partnerships and coordination with international and regional financial institutions and encouraged the Special Envoy and other partners to continue engagements with them to ensure strategically aligned and integrated interventions. Lastly, she underscored the need to strengthen and enhance the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agendas in the Great Lakes Region and called upon member states and partners to support country-level interventions in the region that strengthen women's and youth leadership in peacebuilding as well as regional interventions to integrate gender and youth in governance institutions in the region.

7. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They expressed concern on the deteriorated security and humanitarian situation in the region, specifically in eastern DRC, and condemned attacks by armed groups. They called upon all armed groups to stop violence and disarm themselves. They also noted with concern the rise in hate speech and discrimination, as well as increased attacks against civilians and human rights violations. They also emphasized the importance of regional approaches to address the multiple and complex drivers of instability in the region.

- They welcomed and expressed support for the Nairobi and Luanda processes and encouraged further alignment of both processes. They also welcomed the work of the Special Envoy's Office, as well as other UN efforts on peacebuilding, development, and security in the region to find sustainable solutions to the root causes of the conflicts, which include among others, political instability, poverty, food insecurity, humanitarian crises, forced displacement, tensions over natural resources and other destabilizing factors. They stressed the prioritization of the political track and political commitment in solving the crises, as well as confidence building among the regional States.
- They emphasized that military and non-military measures must be aligned, including with MONUSCO's efforts, underscoring the importance of DDR and security sector reform. They also noted that fostering good governance, advancing sustainable development, promotion of human rights and respect for humanitarian law should be at the core of the mandate of new regional forces.
- They expressed support to the implementation of the UN Regional Strategy, the updated Action Plan, and the flagship initiatives, welcoming the comprehensive, coherent, and integrated approach to tackle multi-faceted challenges in the region. They highlighted the importance of strengthening the civil society, as well as finding durable solutions to continued forced displacement caused by multiple inter-related drivers. They emphasized that international community should scale up financial and technical support to the flagship initiatives and encouraged the Special Envoy to continue the engagement with partners to this end.
- They underscored the economic dimension of the crises and encouraged focusing on inclusive economic development and regional collaboration. They stressed the importance of sustainable natural resource management, and the imperative to tackle illicit financial flows and illegal trafficking of natural resources. Further, they stressed the adverse effects of climate change on the region, and the importance of focusing on increased investment and support to adaptation and mitigation measures with a view to preventing its worsening implications on the overall peace and security of the region.
- They highlighted the importance of women and youth inclusion and empowerment in peacebuilding and political processes and structures, as well as in the economic sectors. They noted that women's inclusion should be ensured in all peace processes at all levels. They stressed that inclusive approaches are necessary to ensure legitimacy and sustainability of peace processes.
- They emphasized the importance of coordination and coherence, as well as tangible results in the implementation of the processes and initiatives in the region, including the UN Regional Strategy and Action Plan.
- They commended the PBC's engagement on the region and on the UN Regional Strategy. They also noted the complementarity of the PBC and the Security Council and welcomed the PBC advice to the Security Council.

- They stressed the value, importance, and catalytic role of the PBF at local, national, and regional levels. They emphasized the need to enhance PBF's investment in the region and in that context stressed the importance of securing adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Xia echoed the importance of PBC engagement on the Great Lakes region and thanked for the contributions and support of the Member States. He noted the importance of full cooperation with MONUSCO and other UN entities in the region, as well as the issue of coordination and coherence at all levels. He also noted that underlying causes of instability in the region must be dealt with in more decisive manner, based on the implementation of Addis Ababa Framework Agreement and reiterated the complementarity of military, political, and diplomatic efforts.

In his closing remarks, the Chair noted the positive development of enhanced efforts of cooperation and collaboration in the region. He expressed that PBC will continue engagement with the region in mobilizing political, diplomatic, and financial support to advance national and regional initiatives, including the UN Regional Strategy Action Plan.