



Security Council

Distr.: General
30 September 2024

Original: English

Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2717 \(2023\)](#), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report every six months on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and its linkages with the broader security situation in the region.¹ It provides an overview of peace and security developments since the previous report ([S/2024/278](#)), covering the period from 16 March to 15 September 2024.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. During the reporting period, the overall security situation in parts of the Great Lakes region deteriorated further, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cross-border security incidents between some countries in the region continued to be reported. On 3 May, rocket explosions at the displaced persons camp in the Mugunga quarter of Goma, North Kivu Province, killed at least 12 people, including six children, and injured several others. In a press statement on the same day, the United States Department of State accused the Rwanda Defence Forces and Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) of perpetrating the attack. The spokesperson of the Government of Rwanda, on 5 May, rejected allegations of Rwandan involvement. On 6 May, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo condemned the attack as an “act of terrorism” and urged the international community to impose

¹ In this context, the region refers to the 13 signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely: Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations.



“political and economic sanctions” to constrain Rwanda to stop its “activities on Congolese territory”.

3. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, clashes continued between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and M23, despite a humanitarian truce brokered by the United States of America, which came into effect on 5 July. M23 consolidated its control and expanded its area of operations in North Kivu and South Kivu. In North Kivu, M23 took control of Rubaya, a key mining town, as well as Kanyobagonga, a strategic transit town. On 18 May, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deployed a fighter jet for the first time since February, reportedly prompting M23 to withdraw from its southernmost positions in Masisi territory. In Lubero territory, from 28 to 30 June, M23 occupied the towns of Kayna, Kirumba and Kaseghe, after intense fighting. On 3 August, M23 took control of the locality of Nyamilima. On 4 August, M23 seized the locality of Ishasha in Rutshuru territory close to the border with Uganda. The same day, a ceasefire that had been agreed between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda during a ministerial meeting held in Luanda on 30 July took effect. Nevertheless, on 25 August, clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and M23 in Kikuvu, North Kivu Province, reportedly resulted in 11 fatalities among the Armed Forces and 14 M23 fatalities, and M23 recaptured Kikuvu.

4. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remained a major threat to civilians in Ituri Province as it stepped up attacks in North Kivu Province during the reporting period, in terms of both frequency and lethality. Between 20 March and 25 August, ADF reportedly carried out several attacks, despite renewed pressure from joint operations by Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under Operation Shujaa, which resumed at the end of May. In total, 662 persons were killed during the attacks. On 18 March, the Government of Uganda issued a press release, warning about the risk of ADF elements crossing the border from the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the intent of carrying out attacks in Uganda. Between 4 and 7 June in Beni territory, North Kivu Province, 80 civilians were reportedly killed by ADF attacks.

5. Military cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda against ADF continued through Operation Shujaa under a changed military leadership in Uganda, following the appointment of General Muhoozi Kainerugaba to the position of Chief of the Defence Forces of the Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces on 21 March. On 6 May, the Chief of the Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces met with General Christian Tshiwewe Songesha, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Kasindi, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, to review progress on joint operations. During the meeting, General Kainerugaba cited Operation Shujaa as a model for African security cooperation to address common threats. He highlighted progress made in weakening ADF.

6. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) also remained active in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The armed group was reportedly responsible for 194 human rights abuses, including the death of 20 individuals. Furthermore, Rwanda continued to accuse the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of collaborating with FDLR, despite a ban announced by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in November 2023, prohibiting Congolese forces from cooperating with FDLR.

7. Meanwhile, clashes between the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara) and the Burundi National Defence Force continued in South Kivu Province. In Burundi, several grenade attacks were recorded on 24 April and 5 and 10 May. On 11 May, the spokesperson for the Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security of Burundi accused Rwanda of recruiting, training,

equipping and deploying the perpetrators of the attack perpetrated on 10 May, through RED Tabara. The Government of Rwanda, in a statement issued on 12 May, rejected the accusations. RED Tabara also denied responsibility for the attack.

8. On regional security efforts, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued its deployment of troops and assets, including artillery, to North Kivu. Together with the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they engaged M23 near the town of Sake on 30 May in a joint offensive. Between March and August, six soldiers of the SADC Mission were killed in mortar fire, including three soldiers of the United Republic of Tanzania and three soldiers from South Africa. Burundian soldiers, as part of a bilateral agreement with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reportedly also continued to support the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo-led coalition against M23.

B. Political developments

9. Relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda remained tense, despite high-level engagements in the context of the Luanda process. Congolese authorities repeatedly called for sanctions against Rwanda for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwandan authorities, in turn, insisted that M23 was an internal Congolese issue, while highlighting the threat posed to Rwanda by the support given by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to FDLR.

10. Relations between Burundi and Rwanda remained strained during the period under review. During a ministerial retreat organized by the East African Community (EAC) from 6 to 8 July in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation of Burundi and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda agreed to meet by 31 October to discuss outstanding issues affecting bilateral relations.

11. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a new Government was sworn in on 12 June, following the appointment of Judith Suminwa Tuluka as the country's first woman to hold the office of Prime Minister, on 1 April.

12. In Rwanda, general elections were held on 15 July 2024. According to the results released by the electoral commission, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, was re-elected with 99.15 per cent of the vote and overall voter turnout reached 98 per cent. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its allies won 62.67 per cent of the vote in the parliamentary elections.

13. In the United Republic of Tanzania, on 21 July, the Office of the President, Samia Suluhu Hassan, announced a cabinet reshuffle. The changes included the appointment of Mahmoud Thabit Kombo as the new Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, replacing January Yusuf Makamba.

Regional peace processes

14. Efforts to address the ongoing conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and its regional implications continued through the Luanda process, which intensified during the reporting period. On 21 March, a ministerial meeting between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda was held in Luanda. The meeting was facilitated by the Minister for External Relations of Angola, Tété António. The respective ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda reportedly agreed to propose to their Heads of State a cessation of hostilities, including a supervised ceasefire and the disengagement of forces, the development by the

Democratic Republic of the Congo of a plan for the neutralization of FDLR, the subsequent review by Rwanda of the measures in place to ensure its defence and security, and the adoption of confidence-building measures, among other steps.

15. Following separate consultations on 4 and 20 July, with his Congolese and Rwandan counterparts, the Minister for External Relations of Angola, Mr. António, convened a second ministerial meeting on 30 July in Luanda. According to the presidency of Angola, the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda agreed to: (a) a ceasefire that came into effect on 4 August, to be monitored by the ad hoc verification mechanism, which should be reinforced by intelligence experts of the three countries, as well as other entities; (b) the operationalization of the FDLR neutralization plan; and (c) the development of a plan for the disengagement of forces from eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 7 August, intelligence experts of the three countries met in Luanda to assess a proposal by the mediator on a harmonized plan for the neutralization of FDLR and to establish a disengagement plan of forces on the ground.

16. A third ministerial meeting on the peace and security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo was held from 20 to 22 August in Luanda to review a peace agreement proposal put forth by the President of Angola, João Lourenço. The meeting followed separate exchanges by the President, Mr. Lourenço, with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi, and the President of Rwanda, Mr. Kagame, on 31 July and 1 August, respectively, and subsequent visits by the President of Angola to Rwanda on 11 August and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 13 August. On 30 August, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo replaced his High Representative for the Luanda and Nairobi processes, Serge Tshibangu, with Sumbu Sita Mambu, who was designated High Representative for the Luanda process and regional economic organizations.

17. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda convened again in Luanda on 14 September, after an expert meeting held on 29 and 30 August in Rubavu, Rwanda. The Ministers reviewed the recommendations from the expert meeting in Rubavu and discussed the proposed plan for the neutralization of FDLR and the disengagement of forces on the ground. The meeting concluded with the Ministers signing the minutes of the third and fourth ministerial meetings.

18. As regards the Nairobi process, following his visits to Burundi and Rwanda in February, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, in his capacity as EAC Chairperson, visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 24 and 25 March, and Angola on 26 and 27 March, where he discussed peace and security in East Africa and the Great Lakes region. In both countries, Mr. Kiir underscored the need for expeditious progress in the EAC-led Nairobi process and in the Luanda process.

19. On 7 June, the Heads of State of EAC met virtually for their twenty-third Extraordinary Summit, chaired by Mr. Kiir. The summit received a report from Mr. Kiir on his consultations in February and March 2024 with the Presidents of Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, and directed EAC foreign ministers to deliberate on the issues raised in the report by 15 July. During the Summit, Veronica Mueni Nduva of Kenya was appointed as the new Secretary-General of EAC.

20. The EAC ministerial retreat was subsequently held in Zanzibar from 6 to 8 July. In the final communiqué, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs recommended the convening of a summit of EAC Heads of State to revive the EAC-led Nairobi process, in close coordination with the Luanda process.

21. Meanwhile, the facilitator of the EAC-led Nairobi process and former President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, continued outreach efforts in the region with a view to reviving the process.

C. Humanitarian situation

22. The humanitarian situation reached unprecedented crisis levels in several parts of the region, with additional large-scale forced displacements linked to intensifying violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as at the end of June 2024, the region registered more than 6.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing armed conflict and instability, and more than 20.5 million internally displaced persons were reported in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Sudan.

23. The deteriorating security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo led to renewed refugee influxes into neighbouring countries, as well as internal displacements. An additional 1 million civilians have been displaced since October 2023. With nearly 6.4 million persons displaced internally, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to rank as the country with the second-largest number of internally displaced persons in Africa, after the Sudan, with over 11 million internally displaced persons as of June 2024. Incidents of gender-based and sexual violence reached alarming levels, with some 113,000 cases registered, of which UNHCR protection monitoring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had recorded some 3,871 cases as of June 2024. The number of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence in the first half of 2024 more than doubled, compared with the same period in 2023.

24. Food insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remained a critical issue, with young girls and boys resorting to survival sex, especially near and around camps for internally displaced persons. The militarization of camps for internally displaced persons has resulted in heightened risks for civilians to sexual violence, exacerbated by the Government's weakened capacity to ensure the protection of civilians and to deliver basic services. The recruitment of children by armed groups continued unabated.

25. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania continued to host approximately 323,800 Burundian refugees.

26. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan has resulted in more than 2 million people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Approximately 26 million people needed humanitarian assistance in the country. The humanitarian crisis has also exacerbated the spread of infectious diseases. As of August 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) had reported approximately 11,000 cholera cases, resulting in more than 300 deaths, with dengue fever and meningitis infections also on the rise.

27. Food insecurity remained a major challenge in the region. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 26 million people in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda were food-insecure, as of 31 July. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, approximately 23 million people were food-insecure. In the Sudan, over 25 million people were facing crisis levels of hunger. This is the first time that catastrophic food insecurity conditions, phase 5 as defined by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), have been confirmed in the Sudan since the inception of IPC in 2004; moreover, in August, famine conditions were confirmed in Zamzam camp in North Darfur, and likely prevalent in Abu Shouk and Al Salam camps for internally displaced persons (near El Fasher).

28. Several countries were also severely impacted by the effects of climate change. Heavy rains and flooding linked to El Niño resulted in the loss of life, displacement and destruction in parts of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda.

29. The incidence of communicable diseases also increased, including cholera and measles. In addition, an upsurge of mpox was reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and several neighbouring countries, including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, prompting WHO to declare a public health emergency of international concern on 14 August, which was the second such determination relating to mpox in two years. More than 25,000 suspected and confirmed cases of mpox had been registered in 14 countries in the WHO African region as at 13 September, a significant increase compared with 2023. The Democratic Republic of the Congo accounts for 90 per cent of the reported cases. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, humanitarian funding remained insufficient. The humanitarian response plans for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, set at nearly \$2.58 billion and \$2.7 billion, were funded at only 37 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively.

D. Human rights and the rule of law

30. Human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law, continued to be committed in several countries of the region.

31. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo documented 1,850 human rights violations and abuses between March and 31 July, including summary executions, conflict-related sexual violence, the abduction of civilians and the forced recruitment of children. A total of 83 per cent of those violations and abuses were committed in conflict-affected provinces. Armed groups remained the main perpetrators, allegedly bearing responsibility for 65 per cent of the overall number of abuses, while State agents were allegedly responsible for 35 per cent of violations. ADF combatants were reportedly involved in 184 alleged incidents of human rights abuses between March and 31 July. M23 was reportedly responsible for 200 alleged incidents of human rights abuses, while FDLR combatants allegedly committed 52 abuses.

32. On 5 April, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced the arrest of Eric Nkuba Shebandu, alias Malembe, reportedly a former strategic adviser to the leader of Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC), a politico-military movement that is affiliated with M23. AFC had accused the United Republic of Tanzania of “kidnapping” Nkuba at Dar es Salaam airport on 3 January and transferring him to Kinshasa. A communication was sent on the matter by AFC coordinator, Corneille Nangaa, to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Ms. Suluhu Hassan, on 18 March.

33. In Burundi, the human rights situation remained challenging, with continued reports of targeted killings, kidnappings and arbitrary arrests. Freedom of speech and media remained limited. In an encouraging development, on 14 August, Floriane Irangabiye, a commentator and host for the Rwanda-based Radio Igicaniro, was granted a presidential pardon after serving two years of a 10-year prison sentence on charges of undermining the integrity of the national territory of Burundi.

34. On 16 July, Uganda announced that it had paid the Democratic Republic of the Congo \$195 million of the total amount of \$325 million in reparations awarded on 9 February 2022 by the International Court of Justice in the case concerning *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda)*, in compensation for damage caused to persons, property and natural

resources. In its previous judgment of 19 December 2005, the International Court of Justice had found the coincidence of reports from credible sources sufficient to convince it that massive human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law had been committed by the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

35. On 20 August, the Vice-Minister of Justice of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Samuel Mbemba Kabuya, during a visit to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, reiterated the importance of the Court addressing as soon as possible the application submitted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 21 August 2023 against Rwanda regarding the alleged human rights violations by the Rwandan armed forces and M23 in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. A request for an expedited consideration of the application had been dismissed by the Court in its ruling of 7 March 2024.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

36. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to implement its national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On the commitments to promote reconciliation, tolerance and democratization, national authorities engaged in dialogue and reconciliation initiatives with community representatives from the western Democratic Republic of the Congo to find solutions to intercommunal conflicts affecting the Grand Bandundu region. In this context, a group of 12 representatives from the Teke community submitted a letter to the Office of the President on 1 April regarding the restoration of peace in the affected areas.

37. On 25 and 26 April, national authorities engaged representatives of armed groups and community leaders in Bunia, Ituri Province, which resulted in the signing of an engagement plan aimed at a cessation of hostilities, including by Coopération pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), among other armed groups. The agreement includes measures to facilitate civilian movement, the return of internally displaced persons and the integration of members of armed group into the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

B. Commitments of the region and engagements by the guarantor institutions

38. Efforts by Member States to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation continued amid the dire situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and persisting tensions between some countries of the region. Several joint permanent commissions were convened during the reporting period. Kenya and Uganda held a Joint Ministerial Commission meeting in May, which was focused on strengthening bilateral relations in the areas of foreign affairs, as well as security and economic cooperation. The two countries agreed on the establishment of a Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of bilateral agreements. Burundi and Zambia convened a Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation in June, focusing on the advancement of political, diplomatic and security relations, as well as economic and sociocultural cooperation. In August, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo held the first session of their Joint

Permanent Commission on Defence and Security with a view to enhancing bilateral security cooperation along their shared border.

39. Rwanda and Uganda held meetings in April, May and August that were aimed at strengthening bilateral security cooperation and easing the movement of persons and goods between the two countries. In May, representatives of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reviewed progress made in the context of Operation Shujaa.

40. Heads of State continued their efforts to defuse tensions and consolidate peace in the region. On 9 May, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi, received the Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of Kenya, Musalia Mudavadi, who relayed a message from the President of Kenya, William Samoei Ruto, reiterating the commitment of Kenya to strengthen bilateral trade and business relations, as well as reaffirming its respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both countries agreed to restore optimal diplomatic presences in their respective capitals and to advance preparations for the holding of a meeting of the Joint Commission for Cooperation. On 10 May, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi, visited the Congo, where he discussed ways to resolve the crisis in the region with the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso. On 28 August, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, received a delegation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, who relayed a message from the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi.

41. On 12 August, the ministers responsible for trade of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia agreed to set up a joint commission to verify the origin of goods before their cross-border transport. The agreement had been preceded by an announcement on 10 August by the Government of Zambia of the closure of its borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo subsequent to a ministerial decree issued by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 26 June, suspending imports of specified beverages for a period of 12 months so as to protect the national economy and address rising inflation.

42. On 15 July, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, chaired by Angola, discussed the role of mediation and reconciliation in resolving the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a briefing provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations of the United Nations. Council members also discussed the role of the SADC Mission and its possible alignment with the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

43. On 23 March, the SADC Organ Troika, the SADC Troika and the troop-contributing countries to the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the SADC Mission in Mozambique, during an extraordinary summit, reiterated their support to the Luanda and Nairobi processes. They further expressed gratitude to the African Union Commission and the Security Council of the United Nations for the solidarity and support towards the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was viewed as complementing ongoing diplomatic and political processes.

44. At the twenty-sixth meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, held on 11 and 12 July in Zambia, SADC members commended Angola for its role in supporting both the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the ongoing facilitation of the Luanda process. SADC also welcomed United Nations efforts to explore support options for the SADC Mission. At the forty-fourth ordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of SADC, held on 17 August in Zimbabwe, SADC commended the President of Angola

for brokering a ceasefire agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and called upon the two countries to cease all hostilities. SADC further endorsed the establishment of the Office of a Special Representative of SADC and Head of Mission of the SADC Mission.

45. On efforts to strengthen regional integration and trade, several countries concluded bilateral agreements on critical infrastructure. In March, Kenya and Rwanda agreed to strengthen bilateral trade and transport infrastructure, with a focus on the northern corridor linking Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. On 16 May, Kenya and Uganda signed an agreement on the import and transit of petroleum products. Burundi and Zambia, during their Joint Permanent Commission meeting in June, agreed to enhance mutually beneficial strategic infrastructure, notably, through the development of the Lake Tanganyika Transport Corridor. In July and September, several States members of the northern corridor integration projects convened to assess common achievements and joint projects in the area of defence.

46. In April, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop, travelled to Burundi and Rwanda for consultations with senior government officials on women's leadership and women's contributions to peace and development. She also met with the President of Angola, Mr. Lourenço, in Addis Ababa. In her engagements, the Special Envoy emphasized the commitment of the African Union to support and amplify the voices of women leaders in advancing peace processes and sustainable development.

47. Congolese actors continued their efforts on women and peace and security at the regional level. A delegation of Congolese women led by Julienne Lusenge, in her capacity as a member of the Congolese women's group *Synergie des femmes pour la paix et la sécurité*, and comprising women mediators and human rights activists, visited Luanda from 16 to 20 July 2024, as part of their efforts to promote preventive diplomacy for lasting peace at the local, national and regional levels. They were received by the President of Angola, Mr. Lourenço, and presented a letter highlighting the security, social and economic challenges faced by women. They called on the President of Angola to continue efforts at dialogue with the inclusion of women in the Luanda process, in order to ensure that their concerns are reflected in the peace process.

48. On 5 July, in Lusaka, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the German Agency for International Cooperation officially launched a joint project that is focused on incorporating local perspectives into the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region. The project has already undertaken consultations to examine challenges faced by grass-roots organizations in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda with regard to advancing the women and peace and security agenda and building the capacities of women mediators. The consultations will inform a study on how to strengthen the integration of grass-roots organizations, thereby increasing their influence on policymaking and decision-making processes at various levels.

C. International commitments

49. International partners remained engaged in efforts to support the de-escalation of tensions and conflict in the region. In July, the United States brokered a humanitarian truce in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The President of France, Emmanuel Macron, engaged separately with the Presidents of Angola, the

Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, reiterating his full support for the regional mediation processes under way to find a negotiated solution to the conflict.

50. The International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region met virtually on 28 May to discuss developments and joint diplomatic engagements in support of peace and security in the region. Participants were briefed by the European Institute of Peace and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) on FDLR. During a virtual meeting on 30 July, the International Contact Group agreed to support the ICGLR in convening a summit on regional growth and economic dialogue, undertake a mapping of the roles, capacities and initiatives of regional organizations, notably those of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, and identify and leverage positive stories of regional collaboration and mutual benefit, including lessons learned from cross-border collaboration on minerals and energy-sharing.

D. Revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

51. Efforts to revitalize the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework continued. On 15 April, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa convened the representatives of the guarantor institutions of the Framework to discuss ways to further enhance their role in its revitalization and to contribute to the resolution of the ongoing crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. They agreed, *inter alia*, to meet biannually at the headquarters of one of the guarantor institutions and to establish a technical working group for regular information-sharing, analysis and consultations on joint initiatives with the International Contact Group.

52. On 20 and 21 June, the Special Envoy and the African Union High Representative for the Great Lakes Region co-chaired the thirty-sixth meeting of the Technical Support Committee in Nairobi. Committee members adopted a draft action plan for the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, for consideration by the Heads of State of the countries of the region at the twelfth high-level summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. Consultations are ongoing for the convening of a meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, to review and endorse the draft action plan, before the twelfth high-level summit, to be held in Kampala. Furthermore, a technical mission was deployed to Kampala to initiate preparations with the Ugandan authorities for the summit.

E. Good offices and political engagements of the Special Envoy

53. In view of the dire situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and persisting tensions in the region, the Special Envoy continued to deploy his good offices, encouraging leaders to find political solutions and offering the support of the United Nations. In meetings with senior government officials of Angola, Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, the Special Envoy called for renewed and coordinated efforts to revive and sustain progress in regional peace initiatives, notably the Nairobi and Luanda processes. He also called upon parties to the crisis to show maximum restraint and to resolve differences through dialogue, emphasizing the imperative to adhere to their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, including by refraining from supporting armed groups and by addressing the root causes of conflict and instability in the region.

54. With a view to strengthening collaboration on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Special Envoy also continued to engage

the Coordinator of the National Oversight Mechanism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

55. The Special Envoy also engaged with the former President of Kenya, Mr. Kenyatta, as facilitator of the EAC-led Nairobi process, with the authorities of South Sudan, as Chair of EAC, with the Angolan authorities on the Luanda process, and with officials of the African Union and SADC, in order to promote collaboration, underscoring the complementarity of the ongoing peace initiatives and expressing the continued commitment of the United Nations to contribute to the coordination of these efforts. He further discussed options for targeted mediation support, resulting in the deployment of two experts to the EAC secretariat to enhance support to the Nairobi process and of a technical-level mission to Luanda for further discussions in that regard.

56. In order to sustain support to regionally led peace initiatives, the Special Envoy engaged international partners during his missions to Brussels, London, New York and Paris, advocating increased and consistent support to the regional peace efforts and the de-escalation of tensions and conflicts in the region. He also called for support for the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and its action plan. Furthermore, the Special Envoy and his Office held separate consultations with Belgian authorities and with officials of the European Union, on potential joint efforts under the umbrella of their respective strategies on the Great Lakes region.

57. On 13 May, the Special Envoy also met with senior diplomats of Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Türkiye and Australia (referred to as the MIKTA Group) in Nairobi. They exchanged views on the situation in the region and agreed to enhance collaboration in support of the ongoing peace efforts in the region.

IV. Implementation of the action plan of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region

58. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to lead efforts to advance the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

59. On 16 and 17 May, the Office of the Special Envoy, in partnership with the Office of the Resident Coordinator in the United Republic of Tanzania, organized the third annual retreat of the Strategy's Implementation Support Mechanism in Dar es Salaam. Participants reviewed the action plan for the Strategy for 2024–2026 period, proposed options for a pooled funding mechanism to support resource mobilization efforts and identified ways to enhance coordination among United Nations entities involved in the implementation of the Strategy for consideration by the Senior Policy Group.

60. Efforts to promote and increase the visibility of the Strategy and its flagship initiatives also continued. On 25 March, the Office of the Special Envoy briefed members of the Peacebuilding Commission at the expert level on the initiative on regional judicial cooperation in the context of the Strategy. The Office was joined by representatives of the ICGLR secretariat, the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network and the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations. The briefings highlighted the importance of cross-border judicial cooperation to fight impunity in the region.

A. Reducing the threat posed by foreign armed groups

61. In follow-up to the sixth meeting of the heads of intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, held on 15 December 2023, the Special Envoy facilitated the launch of a regional sub-working group on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration on 9 August in Dar es Salaam. Established within the framework of the Contact and Coordination Group on non-military measures against illegal armed groups, the sub-working group aims to provide a joint platform for national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions to strengthen coordination and cooperation on the repatriation of foreign armed group elements from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The terms of reference, unanimously adopted during the launch of the regional sub-working group, provide for the exchange of experiences between national commissions and the development and implementation of harmonized procedures so as to facilitate repatriation and ensure consistency and effectiveness throughout the region. They are also aimed at enabling improved reception and reintegration in the countries of return, the establishment of a regional database for enhanced information-sharing and monitoring, and supporting joint projects so as to prevent recruitment.

62. From 2 to 12 September, the Office of the Special Envoy supported a mission by the Operational Cell to Burundi and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to verify the identities of Burundian armed group members who had expressed their willingness to disarm and return to Burundi.

B. Promoting the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, trade and investment

63. On 22 and 23 May, the Special Envoy participated in the annual Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, convened by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris. He advocated responsible mineral production and sourcing in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, while highlighting the role of downstream actors in addressing the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources, including such actors as the destination countries of minerals and multinational companies. On the margins of the Forum, the Special Envoy took part in a side event convened by ICGLR and the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, Minerals, Chemicals Importers and Exporters. The event was organized as follow-up to his joint advocacy mission with the ICGLR Executive Secretary, João Samuel Caholo, to China in September 2023. The Chamber of Commerce and the ICGLR Secretariat agreed to prepare a memorandum of understanding on partnership on the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources.

64. From 26 to 28 June, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in partnership with the Special Envoy, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Government of Switzerland, organized a high-level round table at Wilton Park on the theme “Mutual prosperity in Africa’s Great Lakes region”. The event brought together decision makers and experts from the region as well as international partners and regional organizations. Discussions focused on regional approaches to building small- and medium-sized enterprises into businesses of scale and on regional investment partnerships. Participants discussed how to enhance trade integration for mutual benefit and creating regional value chains to support transformation through green, resource-based industrialization and through value addition. During the event, the Special Envoy also highlighted progress made under

the United Nations Strategy flagship initiatives on promoting the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, trade and investment.

65. On 1 July, the Special Envoy facilitated a joint mission with the ICGLR Executive Secretary to Paris with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Mines of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jacques Ramazani. In their engagements with French officials, the delegation discussed collaboration between a Congolese-French initiative on preventing the illicit exploitation of natural resources with ongoing initiatives and mechanisms in the region, particularly on the traceability and certification processes for strategic minerals in the Great Lakes region. The mission identified priority areas of collaboration between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, ICGLR and the United Nations in support of the effective implementation of the recommendations agreed during the workshop on natural resources held in Khartoum, in 2021.

66. From 21 to 24 August, the Office of the Special Envoy and ICGLR undertook a joint advocacy mission to India to engage national authorities in support of the ICGLR regional initiative on the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources. While in India, the joint delegation also attended the twenty-first India Gold Conference, held in Bangalore. On the margins of the conference, the delegation held several closed-door meetings with refiners based in India and the United Arab Emirates to explore options for enhanced collaboration with the private sector.

C. Finding durable solutions to forced displacement

67. From March to June 2024, UNHCR facilitated the return of 8,280 Burundian refugees to their home country. Most returnees were from the United Republic of Tanzania (6,727), while others were from Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. In the same period, 394 Rwandan refugees were assisted by UNHCR to return to Rwanda, including 391 who returned from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A total of 1,127 South Sudanese refugees organized their own return from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Returns from Rwanda and/or Burundi to the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not occur owing to the prevailing high insecurity in the eastern provinces.

68. The voluntary repatriation of refugees living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to neighbouring countries continued, in particular to the Central African Republic, Rwanda and Burundi. Since March, 7,907 refugees have been assisted in returning to their home countries, including 7,231 to the Central African Republic, 622 to Rwanda and 54 to Burundi.

69. Regarding durable solutions for internally displaced persons, the closure of the Kikumbe displacement site in Tanganyika Province was initiated following a survey on durable solutions carried out at 15 sites for internally displaced persons. The aim is to support the return of internally displaced persons to their places of origin and to build sustainable shelters for those who have chosen to integrate locally. This initiative was also explored in Ituri Province, where 1,548 durable shelters have been built (out of 2,100 planned shelters) for internally displaced persons wishing to integrate locally in Bunia and surrounding areas, in addition to a land security project.

70. On 5 and 6 September, the Office of the Special Envoy participated in a regional refugee response workshop organized by ICGLR in Kampala. The workshop concluded with agreement on a draft road map for the development of an ICGLR regional strategy on comprehensive durable solutions for refugees in the region.

D. Advancing the inclusion, participation and empowerment of women and youth

71. The Special Envoy continued to advocate the inclusion of women's perspectives in peacebuilding efforts across the region. On 17 April, in partnership with the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, the Special Envoy convened senior women leaders, civil society representatives, women's rights activists and experts from the region to reflect on ways to ensure active roles for women in regional peace and political processes. Participants agreed on the need to strengthen existing regional and continental structures of women mediators, to map and promote existing local peace initiatives led by women, and to integrate a gender perspective and gender-sensitive language into peace initiatives and agreements.

72. The Office of the Special Envoy, in partnership with ICGLR and the United Nations Population Fund, developed a gender barometer for the Great Lakes region to facilitate collaboration on data collection in ICGLR member States, with a view to addressing gender gaps and enhancing accountability for commitments on gender equality and women and peace and security. The barometer will be used as a tool to support ICGLR member States in evidence-based programming and budgeting.

73. On 22 and 23 August, the Office of the Special Envoy, together with representatives of the other guarantor institutions, supported the organization of a regional forum on women from the Great Lakes region, which was convened in Bujumbura by the Government of Burundi in its capacity as Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. The forum was held in follow-up to the eleventh high-level summit of the Mechanism, during which participants had called upon Burundi to facilitate a platform for dialogue for women and youth in order to contribute to regional peace efforts. The forum concluded with several recommendations on ways to unify and amplify the voices of women in peace and development efforts in the region, including through the appointment of a goodwill ambassador to champion the aspirations of women in the region.

E. Promotion and protection of human rights, and the fight against impunity

74. Efforts to promote regional judicial cooperation in the fight against impunity continued. On 6 June, the Office of the Special Envoy and ICGLR organized the third review committee meeting on the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance, adopted in 2019, and the Kinshasa Declaration on Enhancing Judicial Cooperation in the Great Lakes Region, adopted in 2022. It was agreed that Committee members who have not yet done so would accelerate efforts to establish a national central authority and put in place national working groups and action plans for the implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration. In addition, Committee members were encouraged to review the draft common policy in response to cross-border crimes in the region, which was developed by a consultant and presented at the meeting.

V. Partnerships with regional organizations and mechanisms, and United Nations system entities

A. Regional organizations and mechanisms

75. The Special Envoy remained focused on strengthening collaboration and partnership with regional and subregional organizations. Through joint initiatives on judicial cooperation and on women and peace, and security, as well as joint advocacy missions on natural resources management, he sustained strong collaboration and coordination with ICGLR based on the complementarity of programmes and synergies in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the ICGLR Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

B. Other United Nations system entities

76. The Special Envoy prioritized collaboration with other United Nations entities in the region. In addition to joint implementation of the regional Strategy, the Special Envoy facilitated three political coordination meetings, bringing together political affairs officers, as well as peace and development advisers working in the region. The meetings provided an opportunity to develop a shared analysis of recent peace and security dynamics at the national and regional levels, review and assess the impact of United Nations support to ongoing region-led peace efforts, and identify ways to improve joint analysis, messages and engagement in United Nations support to the region on peace and security.

77. On 4 July, together with MONUSCO, the Office of the Special Envoy organized a dedicated meeting on natural resources. Participants from peace operations and special political missions in the region, as well as from agencies, funds and programmes, discussed options for strengthening the analytical capacity of the United Nations on natural resource dynamics in the region, promoting comprehensive and complementary good offices on natural resources, and enhancing regional programming on natural resources, including in the context of the MONUSCO transition.

78. In order to enhance the coordination of United Nations support to regional peace processes, the Special Envoy, MONUSCO, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office to the African Union initiated a coordination mechanism. On 22 May, the Special Envoy convened the first coordination meeting at the level of heads of mission, followed by a technical-level meeting on 27 June.

79. The Special Envoy, through his Office, participated in the regional conference on unconstitutional changes of Government in Central Africa, organized by UNOCA with support from the Institute for Security Studies on 1 and 2 July in Sao Tome and Principe. Discussions focused on the root causes, normative frameworks and policies in Central Africa to prevent unconstitutional changes of Government and to manage political transitions.

VI. Observations

80. I remain deeply concerned about the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, its humanitarian impact and its regional ramifications. The past months have witnessed a significant territorial expansion of the rebel group M23

and a worrisome surge in attacks by ADF. These dynamics have prompted additional mass displacements and worsened an already dire humanitarian situation. Congolese women and children continue to bear the brunt of the violent conflict, with alarming levels of conflict-related sexual violence and widespread recruitment of children by armed groups.

81. The proliferation of armed State actors in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the growing use of advanced military technology and equipment in conflict and the use of armed groups as proxies by signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework has further affected bilateral relations in the region, raising the risk of a regional conflagration. In this regard, I reiterate my call upon the Framework's signatory countries to abide by their commitments. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the region must be respected, and no country should tolerate or provide assistance or support to illegal armed groups.

82. At the same time, I am encouraged by the humanitarian truce in July as an important step towards de-escalation. I further welcome the ceasefire agreement signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda on 30 July with the mediation of Angola and I urge both sides fully implement its provisions, and to give ongoing regional peace processes a serious chance of success. It is paramount that the countries concerned fully and sincerely engage in the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes. I also urge Burundi and Rwanda to seek a peaceful resolution of tensions by building on dialogue and positive gains achieved in bilateral cooperation in recent years.

83. I remain encouraged by the broad consensus in the region on the need to find political solutions to the conflict. In this regard, I applaud the leaders of the region for their efforts to reach a peaceful resolution of conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend the unwavering efforts by the President of Angola, Mr. Lourenço, to facilitate dialogue under the Luanda process with a view to achieving a lasting ceasefire, bolstering mutual confidence and paving the way for sustainable peace. I also welcome the efforts of the President of South Sudan, Mr. Kiir, to advance the EAC-led Nairobi process.

84. Building on these regional diplomatic engagements, the Special Envoy will continue to support the Luanda and Nairobi processes, as well as promote coordination and coherence between them. The Special Envoy will also continue to coordinate closely with the Special Representatives for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central Africa and the African Union in the context of the quadripartite mechanism, to maximize the combined impact of their good offices and technical support to the region.

85. The threat posed by foreign armed groups remains a key source of instability in the Great Lakes region. The renewed commitment to address the issue of FDLR, within the framework of the Luanda process, marks a significant step in the right direction, which must be supported. The Special Envoy will continue to do so, in coordination with the Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

86. I note the efforts of the Contact and Coordination Group and its operational cell on non-military measures to address the persistence of illegal armed groups presence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the ongoing plans to repatriate foreign ex-combatants to their countries of origin, voluntarily and without political conditions. I welcome the establishment of a regional sub-working group on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration. I call upon all concerned countries to enhance cooperation in the demobilization and repatriation of foreign ex-combatants, as a means of building mutual confidence and trust. I encourage

international partners to continue to provide critical resources for the functioning of the Contact and Coordination Group operational cell.

87. Ensuring the inclusive and meaningful participation of women and young people remains paramount for the attainment of durable peace and security. I welcome ongoing efforts to strengthen the role of women in regional dialogue processes, including by creating spaces and platforms for community perspectives to contribute to the regional women and peace and security agenda. I reiterate my call upon all stakeholders from the region to integrate gender perspectives into peace initiatives and agreements. I commend the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi, on the appointment of the first female Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Special Envoy will continue to support regional efforts to enhance the meaningful participation of women and youth in policy decisions through the implementation of related initiatives under the regional strategy.

88. I am encouraged by the progress made in the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation 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 draft action plan marks an important milestone in the revitalization process. According to the signatory countries, the Framework agreement remains the most comprehensive mechanism to chart a way forward for durable peace, stability and mutual prosperity in the Great Lakes region.

89. The humanitarian situation in the region is deeply alarming. The combination of conflict-related displacements, the impact of climate change-induced heavy rainfalls and of outbreaks of disease, and catastrophic levels of food insecurity exacerbate the vulnerability of the people of the region. I therefore call upon international partners to step up their support to the humanitarian response plans for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan during this critical moment.

90. I am also deeply troubled by reports of continued human rights violations and abuses, as well as breaches of international humanitarian law. Impunity for such violations and abuses must stop, and perpetrators must be held to account.

91. I express appreciation to the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and his Office for their steadfast support to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and in the ongoing region-led peace processes.