

Remarks by the PBC Chair

Security Council briefing on the Great Lakes region Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region

12 April 2021

1. I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief on the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement in support of peacebuilding and regional cooperation in the Great Lakes region which, with the consent of the States of the Great Lakes region, supports the mandate of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and complements the work of the Security Council in the region.
2. Before I present some highlights of the PBC engagement, I would like to acknowledge the comprehensive presentation by the Special Envoy on the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. I look forward to our continued cooperation in support for its implementation, particularly the peacebuilding priority areas in which the PBC has a comparative advantage.
3. Since its first meeting on the Great Lakes region in November 2017, the PBC has emphasized the importance of mobilizing support for peacebuilding and regional cooperation initiatives, in the broader context of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework). During a more recent meeting, in June 2020, the Commission discussed ways to support regional socio-economic cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes, as a key component of building and sustaining peace and fostering sustainable development. This is even more important in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuing challenges posed by Ebola. The PBC noted that the COVID-19 pandemic could contribute to the deterioration of regional macroeconomic indicators, the disruption of economic activities and increase pressure on national budgets, thereby affecting the countries' capacities to address peace and security challenges.
4. The PBC engagement with the Great Lakes region has supported strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding and development in the region. In November 2020, the PBC considered the recommendations that emerged from a series of regional consultations that were designed by regional women leaders with support from the Office of the Special Envoy and were well attended by a broad array of local and international stakeholders. The recommendations centered around the need to prevent all forms of violence against women, particularly sexual violence, to empower women and youth as agents of social and economic transformation, particularly in view of COVID-19, and to promote their meaningful participation in political processes and peacebuilding. As Ms. Brenda Denousse, a woman business leader from the region, noted in a recent PBC meeting, Small

and Medium Enterprises, particularly those owned by women, have experienced the largest effects of the risk associated with COVID-19 compared to large scale businesses. Informal cross-border trade, another important source of income for many women in the region, has also diminished due to the impact of the pandemic. The Commission committed to remain engaged with the countries of the Great Lakes region, including by advocating for resource mobilization and giving due attention to women-led peacebuilding and development initiatives in the region. The PBC will continue to advocate for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in peacebuilding in the region, in line with its recently adopted action plan.

5. Furthermore, the PBC collaborates closely with IFIs and regional actors, including by inviting them regularly to our meetings. Thanks to this collaborative approach, the Commission has stayed abreast of the World Bank's regional support to the Great Lakes, which is complemented by the Bank's increased country-based support to promote resilience and prevent resurgence of crises. The World Bank Great Lakes initiative, with total commitments of approximately 1 billion US\$ in support for the PSC Framework, aims to promote peace, stability and economic development through economic cooperation and regional integration. It reinforces other financial instruments designed to tackle vulnerabilities and improve community resilience. At the PBC meeting in June, the Bank also presented additional resources to support country responses to COVID-19 and underlined the readiness of the Bank to work with partners to strengthen regional integration, including through the World Bank Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (2020–2025).

6. The PBC supports the cross-border cooperation in the region in the context of the PSC Framework, including ongoing support for enhanced security cooperation. The PBC has also welcomed and encouraged continuous PBF contributions in support for national, cross-border and regional peacebuilding initiatives in the region. Past and on-going projects funded by the PBF in the Great Lakes region amount to US\$ 167 million and cover Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The PBF investments in the region on cross-border trade and food security, as well as in support of the reintegration of former combatants in the region, contribute to the work of the Special Envoy in the region and to the broad implementation of the PSC Framework.

7. Furthermore, we will discuss with the Special Envoy and countries of the region which areas of the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region the PBC can support. This could include helping to mobilize international support for processes of disarmament demobilization and reintegration of former combatants of various armed groups in the Great Lakes region.

8. We also remain engaged to help mobilize international partners in the context of the upcoming Kigali Investment Forum, organized jointly by the Special Envoy's office, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Rwanda Development Board. We will also continue to consolidate our partnership with the World Bank and other IFIs in strengthening regional integration, including through the instruments supporting coordinated response to COVID-19 and post-COVID recovery. Furthermore, and to be able to harness the full economic capabilities of the region, the PBC encourages joint efforts to promote transparency and integrated regional management of natural resources including through Regional Certification Mechanism.

9. To conclude, the PBC will continue to support the countries of the region, according to their nationally identified priorities, and in coordination with the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), AU and the UN system, including in the context of the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. We will also work to build more coherent approach that joins all the stakeholders together for the sake of stability, development and prosperity in the Great Lakes Region in line with the SC resolution 2389 (2017). The PBC remains ready to continue to exercise its advisory role to the Security Council in that regard.

I thank you, Mr. President.
