3. The situation in the Great Lakes region

During the period under review, the Security Council held one meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region, which took the form of a briefing.\(^{63}\) In addition, in 2020, Council members held one videoconference but did not adopt any decision in connection with this item.\(^{64}\) More information on the meetings and videoconferences is provided in the tables below.

Further to the two reports of the Secretary-General,\(^{65}\) during his briefings, the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region focused on the activities of his office in supporting the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region.

In the videoconference held on 22 April 2020, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General informed the Council about the public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting its negative repercussions on the economy and the implications for peace, security and development of the region.\(^{66}\) In that context, he informed the Council that the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework had been affected, resulting in the postponement of important meetings which were to be held in the region, including the second Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference and the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.\(^{67}\) Nevertheless, optimism remained given the peaceful political transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the progress in normalizing relations between Uganda and Rwanda, the formation of a unity Government in South Sudan and the diplomatic settlement by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia of their border dispute. In support of the regional efforts to increase coordination and exchange of information among the armed forces of the countries of the region, the Special Envoy facilitated discussions among the heads of intelligence services of Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the

\(^{63}\) For more information on the format of meetings, see part II sect. II.
\(^{64}\) For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.
\(^{65}\) S/2020/272 and S/2020/951.
\(^{66}\) See S/2020/325.
\(^{67}\) Ibid.
Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. In this regard, the Special Envoy requested the Council’s support to enable those countries to secure the necessary technical and financial assistance to implement the measures to be adopted by the Heads of State of the region. The Special Envoy noted, however, that there were still challenges, the greatest of which remained the activities of armed groups, including the illicit exploitation of natural resources. He also referred to the upcoming elections in the region, particularly in Burundi and the Central African Republic, which needed to be closely followed. Faced with the challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuing Ebola epidemic, he affirmed the need to redouble efforts to support the States and peoples of the Great Lakes region to overcome the two public health crises and to consolidate the progress made so far in implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. For his part, in collaboration with the guarantors of the Framework and international partners, the Special Envoy announced his five priorities for the following months, namely, the mobilization of the international community in helping the countries of the region to address the COVID-19 pandemic; supporting the ongoing facilitation processes; encouraging regional security cooperation by promoting a comprehensive approach, with military and non-military measures, in combating armed groups; engaging in regional and international discussions on the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources; and continuing the necessary discussions on the convening of the next summit of the Framework’s Regional Oversight Mechanism and of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference.

During the discussion, Council members expressed support for the work of the Special Envoy and mentioned the importance of a new peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. Several Council members also echoed the Secretary-General’s ceasefire appeal and highlighted its importance in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the humanitarian situation and political processes in the region. Council members further noted the positive developments in the region, at the same time warning about the risk of losing the momentum of

68 Ibid., p. 3.
69 Ibid., p. 4.
70 Ibid., Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Russian Federation, and Tunisia (also on behalf of Niger, South Africa, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).
71 Ibid., China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.
regional cooperation. On Burundi, the representative of France expressed vigilance and noted that peaceful, inclusive and credible elections would contribute to the region’s path towards political stability and peace. Similarly, the representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States expressed concerns about the electoral environment and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the elections in Burundi. The representative of Tunisia, speaking also on behalf of Niger, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, noted the ongoing preparations for the general elections in Burundi as the only viable alternative to lead the country to consolidate a peaceful and stable political environment. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that political decisions could lead to long-term stability only if they were taken by the countries themselves.

At its 8767th meeting, held on 13 October 2020, the Council heard a second semi-annual briefing from the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region. Overall, he noted that the situation in the region over the past months had remained stable with encouraging progress despite the ongoing challenges. On the political front, the Special Envoy welcomed the peaceful transfer of power in Burundi following the May general elections and the fact that the countries of the region were availing themselves of diplomatic means and regional mechanisms to resolve their differences peacefully, as seen in the resolution of the border dispute between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. The Special Envoy also cited as another positive example the commitment of Rwanda and Uganda to proceed in the process of normalizing their relations through the good offices of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He noted, however, that the security and humanitarian situations continued to be cause for concern and made reference to the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, he mentioned that the activities of armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to cause intolerable humanitarian suffering. He explained that the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for those crimes traumatized the population and negatively affected relations between the countries of the region, affirming that he intended to continue his advocacy to strengthen the fight against impunity, in particular by effectively implementing the Nairobi

72 Ibid., Germany, United Kingdom and United States.
73 See S/PV.8767.
Declaration on Justice and Good Governance. Regarding the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Special Envoy informed the Council about the initiatives he had carried out in line with his five priorities outlined on 22 April 2020. He further announced that he had submitted the United Nations strategy for peace consolidation and conflict resolution and prevention in the Great Lakes region to the Secretary-General on 12 October 2020. He indicated that ten priorities had emerged from the various consultations held aimed at providing a comprehensive ten-year road map for United Nations action in the region focusing on a number of concrete priority actions, particularly in the areas of preventive diplomacy, security cooperation, development, the promotion of human rights and strengthening of the role of women and young people by the year 2023.74

During deliberations, Council members noted the positive developments in the region, at the same time expressing concern over the security and humanitarian situation, in particular in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.75 In addition, Council members reiterated their support for the work of the Special Envoy and welcomed the finalization of the strategy for peace consolidation and conflict resolution and prevention in the region.76 In this regard, the representative of Tunisia, speaking also on behalf of Niger, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, commended the efforts of the Special Envoy in leading the development of the strategy, which they hoped would help identify and elaborate priorities and streamline the United Nations peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution engagements. Similarly, the representative of Belgium hoped that the strategy would allow for an adequate and coherent United Nations footprint in the context of the gradual exit from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and an adaptation of the United Nations approach and presence in Burundi. Furthermore, the representative of Tunisia, speaking also on behalf of Niger, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, stated that they were encouraged by the positive response of several Member States in the region.

74 Ibid., pp. 2-4.
75 Ibid., Germany, United Kingdom, Tunisia (also on behalf of Niger, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and the Russian Federation.
76 Ibid., France, Germany, United Kingdom, Tunisia (also on behalf of Niger, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Indonesia (also on behalf of Viet Nam), Belgium and the Russian Federation.
to the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire, which was supported by resolution 2532 (2020). With regard to Burundi, Council members noted some positive developments and welcomed the peaceful transfer of power following the last election. The representatives of China and the Russian Federation also noted that Burundi no longer posed a threat to international peace and security, and that it should be removed from the agenda of the Council.77

### Meetings: the situation in the Great Lakes region

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<td>S/PV.8767</td>
<td>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/2020/951)</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region</td>
<td>11 Council members, all invitees</td>
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77 Ibid. On 4 December 2020, in connection with the item entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security”, the Council issued a presidential statement relating to Burundi (S/PRST/2020/12), requesting the Secretary-General to cease his periodic reporting on the situation in Burundi and looking forward to the Secretary-General covering Burundi as part of his regular reporting on the Great Lakes region and Central Africa. For further details, see part I, sect. 36 and part IX, sect. VI.

### Videoconferences: the situation in the Great Lakes region

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77 Ibid.