

3. The situation in the Great Lakes region

During the period under review, the Security Council held a high-level meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region, which took the form of a debate,⁵⁵ and adopted one decision under this item. More information about the meeting, including on participants and speakers, is provided in table 1 below. Council members also held one open videoconference in connection with this item. More information about the videoconference is provided in table 2 below. In addition to the meeting and the open videoconference, Council members held one closed videoconference to discuss this item.⁵⁶

Further to the two reports of the Secretary-General,⁵⁷ during his briefings to the Council, 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, the progress achieved on political and security fronts, as well as the persisting challenges, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic situation.

At a videoconference held on 12 April 2021, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General told Council members that despite a difficult situation exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the leaders of the Great Lakes region had maintained their commitment to the Addis Ababa Framework agreement, as demonstrated by several political, security, judicial and economic initiatives.⁵⁸ On the political and security front, he commended the efforts of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of his counterparts in the region, the Presidents of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, in an effort to find concerted and lasting solutions to the issue of armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁵⁹ The Special Envoy also paid tribute to the President of Angola for his commitment, alongside his counterpart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to bringing Rwanda and Uganda closer together in the

⁵⁵ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

⁵⁶ The closed videoconference was held on 12 April 2021, see [S/2021/1084](#). At the time, consultations of the Council were held in the form of closed videoconferences. For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II of the present Supplement and *Repertoire, Supplement 2020*. [See also A/76/2, part. II.](#)

⁵⁷ See [S/2021/306](#) and [S/2021/836](#).

⁵⁸ See [S/2021/351](#).

⁵⁹ For more information about the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, see part I, sect. 4

framework of the quadripartite process. He also encouraged Burundi and Rwanda in their efforts to improve their relations and stated his intention to continue to play his part in helping the two countries in this regard.⁶⁰ Despite the progress achieved, the Special Envoy expressed concern about the level of violence that continued to affect the safety of individuals, especially women and youth, adding that some countries of the region had experienced elections marred by violence and loss of life. In addition, he informed Council members about the four priorities his office was focusing on, namely (i) continuing the Secretary-General's good offices to support the ongoing rapprochement and political dialogue in the region; (ii) providing support for the operationalization of the Contact and coordination group on non-military measures; (iii) protecting natural resources by combatting their illicit exploitation; and (iv) organizing a high-level regional workshop with a view to developing a three-year regional action plan to promote transparent natural resource management. During the videoconference, Council members also heard a briefing from the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission who expressed support for the mandate of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region. The Chair presented some of the highlights of its engagement in the region, including mobilizing support for peacebuilding and regional cooperation initiatives, promoting the role of women in peacebuilding and development in the region, collaborating with international financial institutions and regional actors and supporting cross-border cooperation in the Great Lakes region.

During the discussion, Council members took note of the improvement in bilateral relations among regional countries and the positive developments in terms of regional cooperation.⁶¹ Council members also referred to the importance of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework,⁶² and the need to operationalize the United Nations Strategy for peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region by formulating an action plan for its implementation.⁶³ In this regard, the representative of

⁶⁰ See [S/2021/351](#).

⁶¹ China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, Tunisia (speaking also on behalf of Kenya, Niger and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and Viet Nam.

⁶² China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Norway, Russian Federation, Tunisia (speaking also on behalf of Kenya, Niger and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), United States and Viet Nam.

⁶³ China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, Tunisia (speaking also on behalf of Kenya, Niger and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), United States and Viet Nam.

Ireland welcomed the explicit commitments in the Strategy to addressing conflict-related sexual violence and expressed the expectation to see the promotion of women's roles in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, the representative of Mexico underscored the actions related to strengthening women's participation in mediation and peacebuilding processes. The representative of Estonia also underlined the importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all political processes, and the representative of France called for redoubling of efforts in the promotion of full participation of women in the peace process. In addition, several Council members took note of elections that had taken place in several countries of the region,⁶⁴ and the representative of Estonia called upon all stakeholders to ensure that the upcoming elections in some countries of the region remained peaceful, free and credible. Some Council members underscored the need to address root causes of conflict,⁶⁵ with many also reflecting on the illicit exploitation of natural resources as one of the key drivers of conflict in the Great Lakes region.⁶⁶

In his second briefing to the Council on 20 October 2021, in the context of a high-level debate held at the initiative of Kenya, which held the presidency for the month,⁶⁷ the Special Envoy noted that the theme of the meeting – “Supporting the renewed commitment of the Great Lakes countries in seeking sustainable solutions to the root causes and drivers of conflict” – was meaningful and timely. He highlighted the ongoing political dialogue among the countries of the region and welcomed the progress made in security cooperation in order to overcome the armed groups. In this regard, he noted the launching of the Contact and Coordination Group, responsible for coordinating the implementation of non-military measures to complement military operations against armed groups.⁶⁸ Despite the progress, he noted that challenges remained such as the upsurge in attacks by armed groups, citing the examples of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Bujumbura airport. He further noted that those negative forces remained involved in the illicit exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources,

⁶⁴ China, India and Tunisia (speaking also on behalf of Kenya, Niger and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

⁶⁵ China, France, Norway and Viet Nam.

⁶⁶ Estonia, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Russian Federation, Tunisia (speaking also on behalf of Kenya, Niger and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), United Kingdom, United States and Viet Nam.

⁶⁷ A concept note was circulated by letter dated 13 October 2021 ([S/2021/874](#)).

⁶⁸ See [S/PV.8884](#).

the revenues of which financed arms procurement and recruitment. He also said that the region continued to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which was contributing to the exacerbation of pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. Regarding the United Nations Strategy for peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region,⁶⁹ the Special Envoy told the Council that an action plan for its implementation had been developed by his Office in July during broad consultations. Noting the positive momentum in the region, he said that it was essential that the countries of the region implemented the bilateral agreements signed recently and that they continued, at the regional level, to fulfil the commitments made under regional and international instruments. In that spirit, he welcomed the upcoming important summit meetings, in particular the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to host the tenth summit of the Regional oversight mechanism in Kinshasa in December.⁷⁰

During the meeting, Council members also heard a briefing by the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region (ICGLR) who stated that the region had witnessed the normalization of relations between and among Member States as well as the organization of peaceful and credible elections in a number of countries. He further noted an increase in the participation of women in political and peacebuilding processes. The Executive Secretary then elaborated on specific aspects of his briefing, including on the fundamental role of peacekeeping missions in preventing the illegal exploitation of natural resources and disrupting criminal networks as well as in reducing the criminal exploitation of natural resources, on the question of ensuring long-term, sustainable national and regional coordination for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement programmes, on how the region and the international community could provide support in strengthening the capacity of key State institutions to ensure the effective control and management of natural resources and on the role that all stakeholders could play to transform the productivity of natural resources in the Great Lakes region. In closing, he added that in his experience, the political, social and economic transformation of the Great Lakes region could be achieved only through enhanced ownership of

⁶⁹ See [S/2020/1168](#).

⁷⁰ See [S/PV.8884](#).

practical programmes, the involvement of ICGLR member States and reliable diplomatic, financial and technical support by the international community.

Following the briefings, several Council members welcomed the adoption of an action plan for the United Nations Strategy for peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution and noted the importance of its implementation.⁷¹ In this regard, the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya stated that it was instructive that the sustainable development of natural resources was one of the priorities of the action plan. The representative of France noted that its implementation would require very strong mobilization by the States of the region and that it had to promote transitional justice and national human rights institutions. The representative of Norway referred to the action plan as a good starting point for fostering closer regional cooperation, adding that its focus on involving key financial partners would be helpful in delivering on promises. According to the representative of Viet Nam, the action plan was an excellent platform to channel efforts to assist the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, while the representative of China called on the international community to provide the necessary financial support for its implementation. During the discussion, Council members also welcomed the establishment of the Contact and Coordination Group as an important step in regional efforts to use non-military solutions to address conflict.⁷² In addition, Council members discussed the importance of strengthening regional cooperation in addressing challenges in the Great Lakes region, especially the illicit exploitation of natural resources, as well as the role of regional and subregional organizations in that regard.⁷³

In addition to Council members, the representatives of Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda also took part in the debate and expressed their views on the situation in the Great Lakes region, bilateral relations, regional cooperation and the challenges that were yet to be overcome.

At that same meeting, the Council issued a presidential statement recognizing the progress made in the implementation of national and regional commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and welcoming the United Nations Strategy for peace

⁷¹ Mexico, Tunisia, Niger and China.

⁷² Kenya, Ireland, France, Estonia, Niger, Viet Nam, India and United Kingdom.

⁷³ Kenya, Ireland, France, Norway, Tunisia, Estonia, Viet Nam, India and China.

consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region presented to the Security Council by the Secretary-General.⁷⁴ In the presidential statement, the Council also underlined the importance of socio-economic development for sustaining peace in the region, reiterated its deep concern regarding the humanitarian crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and demanded that all armed groups ceased immediately all forms of violence.⁷⁵ Noting the link between justice and conflict prevention, the Council called upon the countries in the Great Lakes Region to comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and urged them to actively pursue accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the Council stressed that there was no purely military solution to the threat posed by armed groups and that their elimination would require an integrated and regional approach and strong political engagement by the governments of the region, with support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region.⁷⁷ Recognising the linkage between the illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources and the illegal acquisition and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in fuelling and exacerbating armed conflict in the Great Lakes Region, the Council condemned the continued illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region and urged the signatory states of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, regional organizations and the international community to coordinate their efforts to undercut the economic lifelines of armed groups that benefitted from these activities, and prevent the exploitation of women and children in the trade of these resources.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See [S/PRST/2021/19](#), second and fifteenth paragraphs.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, fifth and sixth paragraphs.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, seventh paragraph.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, eighth paragraph.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, tenth and twelfth paragraphs.

Table 1
Meetings: The situation in the Great Lakes region

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decisions and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.8884 20 October 2021	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/2021/836)		Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region	All Council members, ^a all invitees ^b	S/PRST/2021/19
	Letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/874)					

^a Kenya (President of the Security Council) was represented by its Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Ireland was represented by its Minister for Overseas Development and the Diaspora.

^b Angola was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was represented by the High Representative of the President of the Republic and Coordinator of the National Monitoring Mechanism.

Table 2
Videoconferences: The situation in the Great Lakes region

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
12 April 2021	S/2021/351	Letter dated 14 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	