

**Joint Statement on Behalf of A3 (Niger, South Africa and Tunisia) and Saint
Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered by

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Open Videoconference on the Great Lakes Region

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Mr President,

I thank the President of the Council for convening this meeting to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes region. We thank Special Envoy Mr Huang Xia for his briefing.

I deliver this statement on behalf of the A3 +1, (Tunisia, South Africa and Niger) + St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr President,

The positive trends that have the potential to usher in a new era in the region face the high risk of being undermined by the spread of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Our immediate task is to consolidate further these achievements to mitigate the potential risk of the pandemic.

Among these achievements, is the peaceful democratic transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the new dynamic that emerged in the region at the initiative of the country's new leadership. The finalization of the DRC Government's national plan in December 2019 is also a positive development.

In addition, the efforts towards advancing regional cooperation and de-escalation of tensions by the leaders of the region reflect a strong commitment to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation, Framework

We commend the convening of quadripartite ministerial meetings and welcome the latest outcome of the 4th quadripartite summit between the DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and Angola. This development clearly reflects the new spirit of cooperation prevailing in the region.

Mr President,

We share the concerns of the Secretary-General in his latest report that the security situation in the DRC remains fragile given the continued challenges in the eastern part of the Country. However, we commend the DRC's commitment to end the activities of foreign armed groups in the east of the country as well as the joint efforts of countries in the region aimed at the neutralization of foreign armed forces.

We also welcome the progress made towards a comprehensive approach, including military and non-military measures, to prevent a re-grouping and remobilization of these forces. We call on all stakeholders including the Guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to strongly support the recently established Contact Coordination Group, designed to promote cross border coordination and collaboration to neutralize these negative forces.

We note some relatively positive political developments in South Sudan with the appointment of the Transitional Government of National Unity as well as the improved relations between the Sudan and South Sudan which has led to the reopening of their common border to facilitate bilateral trade.

We encourage, in the same vein, the positive developments in the CAR with all the efforts underway, including the electoral process in December, and call on the armed groups not to obstruct the holding of elections. We reaffirm our support for the initiative of the African Union and MINUSCA in the stabilization of the country in the particular context of COVID-19.

We also note 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.

With all these developments, the region is on a path to sustainable stability. The A3 and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore, call upon the international community to continue to support countries in the region to preserve these gains and push forward regional cooperation.

We share the sentiments of the Special Envoy that it is imperative to shift the narrative of the Great Lakes from a conflict-dominated region to that of a region on a development trajectory. In this respect, we commend the work done thus far in preparations for the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference (GLITC) to promote this Conference and its overarching development and integration objectives.

Countries of the region should seize this opportunity to promote solidarity and cooperation through advancing economic cooperation; cross-border trade; infrastructure development and regional integration; and curbing the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources.

The A3+1 call on the international community to provide the necessary development funding in accordance with national plans and needs in order to provide opportunities for legitimate socioeconomic activity. The A3+1 emphasizes that all efforts to bring development to this region must work in the best interests of the peoples of the region

As we continue to work towards silencing the guns in Africa, we must remain resolute in our efforts to bring peace and stability to the Great Lakes Region.

Mr. President,

We are deeply concerned by the impact of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on the countries and the people of the Great Lakes region and the unprecedented and unpredictable consequences it may bring to an already fragile situation in the region. We echo the concerns raised in the 7th Meeting of the Guarantors of the PSC Framework held on 02 April that the pandemic, if not well contained, it could cause considerable economic disruption, social tensions and human suffering. In this spirit, we would like to express our full support to the joint efforts by the countries of the region to fight the pandemic, both at the national and regional levels, including the outcome of the meetings of Ministers of Health of SADC and of the East African Community held on 9 and 25 March, respectively.

We reiterate the calls made by the African Union Bureau of Heads of State and Government on 02 April 2020 identifying the need for rapid and concrete support by the international community to the local governments with a view to assist them to contain the spread of the deadly disease and to ensure regional supply of necessary and vital goods. It is, therefore, of critical importance that the provision of humanitarian support is unhindered, and that special measures are put in place to allow for direct support to those countries vulnerable to the possible destabilizing impact of the virus and the possible undermining of peacebuilding efforts.

We welcome ongoing initiatives, including the revival of the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum designed to promote women empowerment across the Great Lakes region and their equal and meaningful participation as well as representation in political and electoral processes.

In conclusion, we would like to express our full support to the Secretary General initiative that will be led by his Special Envoy to develop, in close consultation with stakeholders and relevant partners, such as the signatories and Guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to devise a peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region designed to review the United Nations support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the region.

Thank you