



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

by

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Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region

Security Council

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Thank you Mr. President,

At the outset, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks the briefers for their remarks and we commend the delegations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of South Africa, the United States of America, and Belgium for convening this timely and important discussion. We also thank the panelists for their useful remarks. The Great Lakes Region is one of immense cultural and economic importance to the African continent, and the illegal exploitation of its natural resources is intricately connected with peace, security and development of the region, the wider continent, and beyond.

As the natural wealth of the Great Lakes is illegally exploited through opaque supply chains, it emboldens armed groups and organized criminals that profit from this activity as they embed themselves within these obscure networks. A comprehensive solution to this complex challenge can only be found through regional partnerships undergirded by the necessary political will to facilitate much-needed reforms. To this end, we welcome the efforts of the regional member states to improve traceability and transparency in these sectors, namely the DRC's utilization of ICGLR certificates, Rwanda's adoption of a national certification mechanism, Uganda's efforts to establish the ICGLR Mineral Tracking and Certification Unit, and Burundi and Tanzania's implementation of domestic ICGLR certification processes in accordance with the Lusaka Declaration. These ongoing commitments are testament to the positive trajectory that we are witnessing across the region, as member states have united in their efforts to improve security and stability in accordance with the PSC Framework - which remains the primary blueprint for peace and prosperity across the Great Lakes. We welcome the efforts of all guarantors of the peace agreement, including the African Union, the ICGLR and SADC, in facilitating this positive momentum. We also commend the Office of the Special Envoy of the Great Lakes for its support in this regard.

In conclusion, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines emphasizes the importance of a regionally-led solution to this issue - one which adheres to international due-diligence standards while addressing the delicate particularities of the region, such as the plight of artisanal miners. The vast natural wealth of the Great Lakes Region belongs to its people, and only a regional approach

that addresses their developmental needs, based on national ownership and regional cooperation, would yield the peace and prosperity that they are destined for.

I thank you.