

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

Delivered by

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Open Briefing on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region

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Mr. President,

I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3+1, namely, Niger, South Africa, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia.

Let me first express our appreciation to Mr. Huang XIA, Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa for his comprehensive and informative briefing on the situation in this region and on the activities of his Office.

We commend the work carried out by Special Envoy XIA and his office in promoting peace in the region through its good offices, mediation and preventive diplomacy, as well as its efforts in supporting election processes in several countries and capacity-building activities in several fields. Our statement will focus on issues pertaining to the Security, Political and Humanitarian situations, in the Great Lake Region and last but not least on the progress made on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region as well as the implementation of the road map of the Special Envoy.

Mr. President,

As it is the case with the rest of the world, the Great Lakes Region was not immune from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the countries of the region to curb the spread of the virus and mitigate its socio-economic impact. We, nevertheless, regret that the pandemic has exacerbated the plight of vulnerable populations and had a disastrous effect on the social and economic activity as well as on the implementation of some initiatives and projects pertaining to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

With regard to the security Situation in the Great Lakes region and despite the harsh constraints due mainly to the Covid-19 pandemic, we salute the ongoing efforts of the Special Envoy and his office towards more peace, security and prosperity in the region and we are encouraged by the positive response from several member States in the region to the Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire during the Covid-19 pandemic which was supported by Security Council resolution 2532 (2020).

We equally salute the active diplomatic dynamics in the region and the willingness of countries to resort to diplomatic channels and dialogue to resolve their disputes and differences. We encourage leaders of the region to further reinforce their relations for the sake of peace, stability and prosperity of the whole region.

We are, nevertheless, concerned by the ongoing activities of many armed groups such the Allied Armed Forces (ADF), members of the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which continue to perpetrate attacks against civilians and engage in clashes with the military forces of some of the region's countries.

Mr. President,

While the security situation in the region remains critical, we notice with satisfaction the political development reflected mainly in the regional cooperation and diplomatic initiatives led by the

leaders of the region despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Countries like Burundi witnessed peaceful and well-organized legislative and Presidential elections and we are looking forward to the accomplishment of similar processes mainly in Tanzania and Uganda. We are encouraged by the ongoing efforts between Rwanda and Uganda to normalize their relations thanks to the facilitation of Angola and the DRC and in the framework of the quadripartite process.

In this regard we note with encouragement the holding of the virtual mini-summit of heads of State of the Great Lakes region called for by President Tshisekedi, on 7 October 2020, as part of his regional outreach to promote cooperation between DRC and its neighbors and to advance the implementation by all stakeholders of the Addis Abeba Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Mr. President,

We concur with the report of the Secretary General about the critical nature of the humanitarian situation in the region, which was further exacerbated by the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, natural disasters and the persistent threat posed by the continued guerilla activities of armed groups.

In this respect, we express our deep concern over the displacement of large number of people in the region where their vulnerability has been further increased. Despite the fact that the human rights situation in the region has witnessed some positive developments mainly with the progress made in the fight against impunity, we express our deep concern over the continued reports of human rights violations and offenses including sexual and gender-based violence both by armed groups and State actors.

Mr. President,

The A3+1 emphasizes the centrality of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to the Great Lakes region which remains “an essential mechanism to achieve durable peace and stability” and encourages enhanced cooperation among all signatory countries. In this regard, while we reiterate the call for the signatory countries to abide by their commitment of non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbors, we nonetheless welcome the recent engagement of leaders of the region through their bilateral and multilateral efforts to strengthen their ties and enhance mutual cooperation.

In this respect, we salute the commendable efforts of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), along with the East African Community (EAC) and countries in the region in supporting those endeavors in line with their respective commitments under the PSC. We also commend the work of sub-regional organizations and mechanisms aiming at sharing best-practices in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and in facilitating cross-border coordination measures to contain this pandemic. We encourage initiatives by leaders in the region aiming at further reinforcing security cooperation and military intelligence sharing to protect their respective borders and contain activities by armed groups.

Mr. President,

We all agree that the role of the international community remains of paramount importance in the region of the Great Lakes. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the engagement of international partners who focused their attention on questions pertaining to development, electoral processes and ways to support the region in meeting challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this respect, we commend the work of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (UNPBC) aiming at supporting those regional efforts to improve economic cooperation, development and peacebuilding in the region.

The A3+1 welcomes the continued and active engagement of the Secretary General's Special Envoy with key stakeholders in the region, the co-guarantors, international partners, and other actors on ways and means to further consolidate the gains achieved in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and promote regional cooperation which will lead to longstanding peace and sustainable development in the region.

In this regard we commend the Secretary General's good offices reflected in his Special Envoy's national and regional efforts aiming at facilitating dialogue, cooperation and confidence-building initiatives between countries of the region.

The Secretary General's efforts towards women advancement and empowerment and youth participation and engagement in the region are commendable and we totally agree that youth and women play an important and essential role in political and socio-economic development as well as in the process of consolidation of peace and security in the region. We equally encourage the SE's efforts to support the fight against impunity and the promotion of the rule of law in the countries of the region.

Mr. President,

Addressing the issue of the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources in the region, remains a real barrier to sustainable development and a source of instability, insecurity, mistrust and tension among countries of the region. We, thus, call on the Special Envoy to continue his efforts and consultations in view of the adoption of a holistic and pragmatic approach to tackle this issue and contain its negative impact on the region.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, while we are looking forward to receiving the United Nations strategy for peace consolidation and conflict resolution and prevention in the Great Lakes region, the A3+1 reiterate their full support to the Secretary General initiative and commend the efforts of the Special Envoy with national, regional, and international stakeholders leading the development of this strategy and which we hope will help identify and elaborate priorities, and streamline the United Nations peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution engagements in support of ongoing efforts by Governments and regional organizations in the Great Lakes region. We also emphasize the importance of a coherent whole-of-system approach that synthesizes the efforts of all peace and security, development, and humanitarian actors in the region.

In this same vein, the A3+1 would like to stress the importance of further strengthening partnerships with regional and international organizations and mechanisms as well as related United Nations entities and mainly the co-guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

Thank you