

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil):

I would like to congratulate Angola and Foreign Minister Chikoti on having organized today's open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and the representative of the World Bank for their briefings.

The Great Lakes region of Africa has been tragically plagued by a long history of violent struggles and conflicts. As stated by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2016/232), the Great Lakes region, 22 years after the Rwanda genocide, continues to face major political, security and humanitarian challenges.

In February 2013, in Addis Ababa, a series of commitments to addressing some of the root causes of instability in the Great Lakes region were agreed by the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, under the auspices of the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community. This Framework remains a key reference for a comprehensive solution to the crises in the region. However, its implementation, as that of the Nairobi Declarations, remains fraught with challenges. As the Secretary-General declares in his last report (S/2016/233) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), it is essential that the signatories of the Framework honour their commitments in order to achieve sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region.

More specifically, we highlight the fact that all 13 signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework have agreed, among other commitments, not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries, to respect their sovereignty, territorial integrity, legitimate concerns and interests, in particular regarding security matters, and to neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups. Regional interventionism has contributed to destabilization in the area and should not be allowed to take place, as it violates both the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and international law, perpetuating instability.

The situation of refugees and internally displaced people remains worrisome. The already fragile humanitarian situation has been aggravated by the recent influx of 245,000 refugees from Burundi into neighbouring countries. Their status and rights should be fully recognized and respected. Reports that some of them have been recruited by armed groups give rise to serious concern.

We welcome the recent general elections in Tanzania, the Central African Republic and Uganda. We also take note that there are political questions related to elections that remain unresolved in some countries of the region. Notwithstanding the support of the international community to find solutions, we underline the need to respect national ownership in the outcomes of these discussions.

The region of the Great Lakes is endowed with abundant natural resources. The illegal exploitation and traffic of these resources has for years helped finance armed groups in the region, as stated in more than one United Nations report. This illegal exploitation also contributes to hindering the development of the affected countries. To give a sense of the dimension of the problem, in its report of January 2014 (S/2014/42, annex), the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo came to the conclusion that 98 per cent of all the gold produced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was smuggled out of the country. It is therefore important to find ways to transform the natural wealth of the region into a driver of sustainable development. In this regard, the promotion of responsible extractive industries and the building of national

capacities and legal institutions are key. Considering the broader question of sustainable development, the private sector can play an important role, as illustrated by the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference, held in Kinshasa last February.

Brazil has cooperated with conflict resolution efforts in the Great Lakes since the beginning of the involvement of the Organization in promoting peace in the region, having contributed troops to the United Nations Operation in the Congo from 1960 to 1964, and more recently, through the designation of General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz as Force Commander of MONUSCO from 2013 to 2015. Presently, Brazil contributes officers to two United Nations Missions in South Sudan — the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei and the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan — and to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

Brazil has also contributed to mitigating the effects of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region with humanitarian donations and cooperation with countries of the region. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have financed initiatives aimed at assisting victims of sexual and gender-based violence and in combating impunity. Brazil has also partnered with UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and civil society organizations in an innovative project that allowed hundreds of children formerly linked to armed groups in the North Kivu region to be socially reintegrated through the practice of the Afro-Brazilian martial art known as capoeira.

As the current Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, allow me to reiterate the importance of the participation of women in political processes related to peace, the protection of civilians, reconciliation efforts and the establishment of a protective environment. Allow me to acknowledge the political leadership exercised by women in the region, and in particular the high percentage of women in the Cabinet and Parliament of Rwanda.

Strategies that do not address the root causes of conflict are unlikely to produce lasting peace in the region. The complexity of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region demand a comprehensive approach towards sustainable peace, focused not only on prevention and the primacy of politics, but also combating the illicit flow and illegal exploitation of natural resources. That comprehensive approach should, among other initiatives, contribute to addressing the need for eradicating poverty, promote socioeconomic development, build institutions, provide access to justice and create more inclusive and reconciled societies. Those strategies should be carried out in close coordination with national authorities and their established priorities, always respecting national ownership.

Two of the six current country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) — Burundi and the Central African Republic — are related to what takes place in the Great Lakes region. My delegation believes that the Peacebuilding Commission, encompassing members from the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, can have an important role in preventing the relapse into conflict in the region. It is important to bear in mind that peacebuilding is a task that reaches beyond the security agenda and encompasses the entire United Nations system. In that regard, we reiterate the need for strengthening the relationship between the PBC and the Security Council, with a focus on our collective engagement with the promotion of sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region.

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