

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Statements

Statement

Secretary-General's Remarks at Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region [As Delivered]

New York , 21 March 2016

I am pleased to join you today for this important and timely debate on the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region.

I thank Angola, as President of the Security Council and Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, for organizing this meeting.

Significant advances have been made over the last 16 years since the United Nations Organization Mission (MONUC) was first deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

These include the withdrawal of foreign armed forces; the reunification of the country; the establishment of a transitional government; the organization of two national elections; and the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region in February 2013.

The last several years have also seen some progress in stabilizing the security situation in eastern DRC.

The defeat of the Mouvement du 23 mars (or M23) and the successful conclusion of the Kampala Dialogue in December 2013 have helped to improve the region's security situation.

Nonetheless, major peace and security challenges persist in the DRC and the region and require our continued attention.

Sustained efforts are required to neutralize all negative forces, including by finding sustainable solutions for former combatants and extending State authority into areas reclaimed from armed groups.

In this regard, I have welcomed the decision of the Government of the DRC to resume joint military planning and operations with MONUSCO to eliminate negative forces, notably the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

I urge the distinguished participants in today's debate to agree on tangible recommendations to accelerate the disarmament and demobilization of all armed groups still operating in eastern DRC.

I also call on the members of the Security Council to reach out to relevant actors and to support our efforts to fully implement the Nairobi Declarations, which ended the M23 insurgency.

There is no doubt that eliminating negative forces will be more challenging if these forces continue to harvest and trade in natural resources from the region.

The illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources is worth billions of dollars.

It is urgent that these economic lifelines are cut.

I am therefore encouraged that my Special Envoy is working with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to help improve the governance of natural resources.

I call on the Governments of the Great Lakes region to formulate sound strategies to turn their states' natural resources into powerful drivers of human and economic development.

I am worried about continued violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in eastern DRC and other parts of the region.

In addition to the violence perpetrated by the many armed groups operating in eastern DRC, the past months have seen a sharp increase in inter-communal and inter-ethnic conflicts.

This is an alarming trend that requires our urgent attention.

Attending to the needs of the most vulnerable people in conflict-affected areas is a key component of the United Nations strategy to promote sustainable peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

In the DRC alone, 7.5 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 1.5 million internally displaced persons.

Due to the threat posed by armed groups, population displacements and human rights violations occur on a daily basis in some parts of the country.

As the DRC enters a delicate electoral period, we are concerned about the risk of election-related violence, which could worsen an already grave humanitarian situation.

The rapidly deteriorating security situation in Burundi is also a concern.

More than 1 million people, including some 25,000 internally displaced persons, are in need of assistance in Burundi.

In addition, some 250,000 Burundian refugees are being hosted in the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

I commend Member States for their hospitality in receiving refugees from neighbouring countries.

I also remind Member States of their international and moral obligation to protect and provide asylum

to refugees.

Under no circumstance should States use refugees for political purposes.

It is also our shared responsibility to prevent the “militarization” of refugee settlements, which must retain their civilian character.

Monsieur le Président,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je suis également très préoccupé par l'impasse dans laquelle se trouve encore l'organisation des prochaines élections en République démocratique du Congo.

Lors de mon récent déplacement dans le pays en février, j'ai prié instamment tous les intervenants de régler leurs différends par le dialogue et de créer des conditions propices à la tenue en temps voulu d'élections crédibles, conformément à la Constitution.

Par le passé, les crises politiques qui ont frappé la région des Grands Lacs se sont traduites par des violences généralisées et de graves problèmes de sécurité.

Nous devons empêcher ce scénario de se reproduire.

Je demande au Conseil de sécurité et aux dirigeants de la région de nous aider à préserver la stabilité politique en République démocratique du Congo en trouvant rapidement une issue à l'impasse actuelle.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we often focus on political, security and humanitarian issues as we discuss conflict prevention and resolution, we should remind ourselves that peace and security go hand-in-hand with human and economic development.

That is why I am very pleased with the success of the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference in Kinshasa in February.

The conference gave Great Lakes leaders a rare opportunity to engage with private investors and business leaders from around the world to discuss how to improve the business and investment climate in the region.

I am particularly pleased with the conference's recommendation that private investors should support business ventures that provide livelihoods for women and youth, with special emphasis on capacity-building and skills development.

Finally, today's meeting marks the official launch of the United Nations Regional Strategic Framework.

This seeks to better align the work of the United Nations in the Great Lakes region with the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

The Strategic Framework has six pillars: sustainable natural resource management; economic integration, cross-border trade and food nutrition security; mobility; youth and adolescents; gender and sexual and gender-based violence; and justice and conflict prevention.

Progress in implementing the Strategic Framework will greatly contribute to sustainable peace and development in the region.

I call on the Security Council, the States of the Great Lakes region and the donor community to endorse the Strategic Framework and extend their full support to its implementation.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Unissons nos efforts pour apporter stabilité, dignité et perspectives d'avenir aux peuples de la région des Grands Lacs.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

Statements on 21 March 2016