

Security Council Debate on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region: DRC and the Great Lakes, July 25th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Canfin, Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.

Allow me, on behalf of France, to warmly thank Secretary of State John Kerry for having undertaken the initiative to convene this high-level meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region, in particular on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As others have said, this is a timely meeting as the humanitarian situation continues to be tragic, with more than 2.5 million displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 450,000 refugees in neighbouring countries.

Recent weeks have been characterized by a new spike in hostilities carried out by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) and other armed groups against the Congolese armed forces. This resumption of hostilities is a test for the international community, for the M-23 and other armed groups are seeking simply to derail the political process under way. It is a political process that seeks to put an end to this tragedy, which has lasted for far too long. It is a test because some players might be tempted to renege on their commitments. Our message is clear: neighbouring countries must stop providing support to armed groups as they have committed to do. The firm and united message being sent by the international community today is a beneficial one, as it will support the efforts of stakeholders sincerely committed to the goal of sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region.

We have made much progress over recent months. We now have a consistent framework that allows us to finally hope that the tragedy that has lasted more than 20 years in the Great Lakes region will be put to an end. The framework is based on two pillars. The first is the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed on 24 February by 11 countries of the region upon the initiative of the Secretary-General. In that regard, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his efforts and determination. It is now the responsibility of the signatories to implement their commitments.

We have also seen many encouraging signs in recent weeks. The adoption by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a national oversight mechanism is a step forward towards the crucial reforms of the Congolese army and police. Full-scale measures must now be quickly undertaken. It is also important for the Congolese army to carry out its activities on the ground in an exemplary manner, and that the abuses committed by Congolese soldiers, which are not excusable, be effectively and severely punished by the country's justice system.

At the regional level, on 26 May, the first meeting of the regional oversight mechanism brought together the majority of the Heads of State of the region on the margins of the African Union Summit. The mechanism first and foremost must ensure that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States of the region is upheld, beginning with that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It must also ensure that their security is not threatened.

The actions taken by Ms. Mary Robinson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, will be crucial for the coordination and assessment of national and regional efforts to implement the commitments undertaken. Madam President, you can be assured of the firm support of France, which remains at your side.

The second pillar of this new context is resolution 2098 (2013), adopted unanimously on 28 March last. The heart of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has not changed: it remains the protection of civilians. However, so as to contribute to that objective, the resolution authorizes, in an

unprecedented manner, the deployment of an Intervention Brigade within MONUSCO. The Brigade's mandate is to neutralize armed groups that engage in violence and threaten civilians. France would like to see the Brigade to become operational as soon as possible.

Another key aspect of resolution 2098 (2013) is that of sexual violence, which continues to see widespread use as a weapon of war, usually with total impunity. Here we welcome the initiative of Ms. Mary Robinson to convene, jointly with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, a conference devoted to the role of women in the process of implementation of the Framework agreement. We know that in that region the bodies of women are all too often the battlefields of men, and, as President Kim noted earlier, that is a blot on our conscience.

Allow me, before concluding, to touch on the issue of development. As Ms. Robinson noted, it is now time to plan for peace dividends for the region as a whole. Here I welcome the personal commitment of President Kim in the context of resolving this crisis, as well as the recent World Bank pledge for the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the signing of the Framework agreement.

France and the European Union will also contribute to the development of the region. The relaunching of the economies of the region will also require transparency in the exploitation of natural resources. The lack of transparency in the exploitation of mining resources must end. As the Council is aware, upon the initiative of the United Kingdom and with the full support of France, the countries of the Group of Eight adopted at the beginning of the month an action plan for transparency in the extractive industries. Moreover, we intend to fully support, both politically and technically, the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish a certification mechanism for minerals from the region. All of those tools will allow us to combat bad practices and to increase the benefits reaped from the exploitation of the region's natural resources for its peoples.

At a time when the M-23 is once again carrying out attacks around Goma, it is important to spare no effort not only to vanquish those who threaten peace but also to relaunch the political dynamic that began with the Framework agreement. So as to allow for the establishment of a lasting peace, all players in the region must cooperate so as to defeat violence and looting. Only then will the Framework agreement be able to pave the way for a tangible improvement in the security situation and living conditions in the Great Lakes region.

Today, on behalf of the millions of people who have died and whom the region has mourned for so many years, we have a collective obligation to succeed.