

Ms. Bird (Australia):

The history of conflict in the Great Lakes region underscores the fact that the trajectory towards peace is rarely linear. Burundi is a prime example. Today a country that had just begun to heal from the wounds of its civil war is again facing renewed conflict. Australia is deeply concerned about the lack of progress that has been made in resolving Burundi's recent crisis, and about the reports of human rights abuses. We call on all parties in Burundi, including the authorities, to take immediate steps to end torture, sexual violence, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Humanrights violations are important early indicators of the potential for atrocity crimes. Respect for human rights must be central to building sustainable peace.

As Burundi's situation demonstrates, regional and international support to sustained political dialogue and early preventive action are key to consolidating peace. Australia welcomed the recent engagement on the part of the Burundian authorities with the African Union high-level mission, the Security Council and the Secretary-General. However, we urge Burundi to also engage, without preconditions, in the mediation talks led by the East African Community. That requires genuine engagement with opposition groups. Critically, mediation talks, together with broader peacebuilding efforts, must be inclusive of all, particularly women, young people and civil society, if they are to address the grievances that fuel conflict.

We note with concern that implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region has recently been limited. In that context, we welcome the agreement on the resumption of military cooperation between the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as today's launch of the United Nations Regional Strategic Framework for the Great Lakes, which aims to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Australia is particularly pleased that the Regional Strategic Framework outlines practical steps for addressing violence against women and girls in the region. We also commend its focus on ending the culture of impunity by strengthening institutions, empowering civil society organizations and enhancing judicial cooperation.

Ultimately, countries must address the root causes of conflicts, including historical and economic grievances, lack of economic opportunity, scarce resources and competition. In that regard, we would welcome further discussion of the critical role played in regional stability by mobilizing domestic resources and enhancing economic integration. As we know all too well, economic growth and prosperity, particularly when derived from natural resources, can either fuel conflict, as we have seen in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or be a driver of sustainable, inclusive growth. Peacebuilding, particularly in the Great Lakes region, must pay particular attention to improving the management and transparency of natural resources, as well as ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are shared equitably.

The path towards a peaceful, stable society is a hard one, and we have many examples where countries have emerged from conflict only to relapse back into it. Indeed, the history of the Great Lakes region emphasizes the fact that achieving just, meaningful and lasting peace requires sustained effort, from action to prevent and resolve conflict to reconciliation and recovery. Australia welcomes the attention being focused on those issues and I look forward to continuing to work with the Angolan presidency, including in our role as co-Chairs of the peacebuilding resolution negotiations that are nearing conclusion.

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