

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

*Statement by Ms. Mary Robinson, Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region.*

I am honoured to speak to the Security Council on this important occasion. I, too, thank the United States for convening this ministerial-level meeting, and Secretary of State John Kerry for presiding and for providing a strong statement as President (S/PRST/2013/11). Let me reiterate my congratulations to Senator Russ Feingold on his appointment as the United States Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I look forward to working very closely with him. I also welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Mr. Martin Kobler, with whom I have established a very good working relationship.

As we have heard, this high-level meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes takes place at a difficult time for the people in the region. The latest round of fighting in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has had devastating consequences yet again on the civilian population, both for those living in and around Goma as well as for the host communities and Governments of the neighbouring countries. Many cases of death, injuries, sexual violence against women and massive displacements of population are still being reported. That cannot be allowed to continue. The fighting must stop immediately, and all parties should exert maximum restraint to avoid a further escalation of the conflict.

As the Council is aware, I have now served as Special Envoy for four months. Not a day goes by without reports of killings, rape, sexual assault and the displacement of people in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The reports are in the dry prose of the code cables or the slightly more descriptive style of journalists filing their copy. What strikes me is the lack of outrage and horror at the daily toll. It has become the accepted normal. But it is not normal and not acceptable. We committed to zero-tolerance to gender-based violence. Zero-tolerance needs to be implemented as a fundamental value of the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Like President Yong Kim of the World Bank, I remember the rows of people in Goma who lined the road holding pieces of paper, mainly in French, which said: "No impunity", "Peace now", "The fighting must stop".

That, in essence, is the promise of the Framework, a promise of peace, security, cooperation and development.

Sadly, there are credible reports of some activities in support of armed groups by different signatory parties to the Framework, which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Framework. As the Secretary-General said, the Force Intervention Brigade, once it becomes operative, will be an important tool with a robust mandate, but it is only one part of a comprehensive approach that embraces security and development.

The stark reality is that those who suffer the most from the endless conflict and its atrocities are, and always have been, the civilian population first, particularly women, children and even babies. As the Secretary-General said in his remarks, hopes were high when the 11 countries and four important regional and international institutions signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, on 24 February, and when the members of the Security Council adopted resolution 2098 (2013), in March. The Framework clearly gives the ownership and the responsibility to the leaders who signed it. I am personally very

encouraged to see that their commitment to it is strong and resolute. If fully implemented, both the Framework and resolution 2098 (2013) would help stabilize the situation on the ground and, more importantly, would pave the way to address the fundamental causes of the cycle of conflicts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes.

That is why I strongly believe that the signatories and guarantors of the Framework and the international community as a whole need to work intensively together to accompany the leaders and the people of the Great Lakes to transform what I call the “framework of hope” into a tangible reality.

Despite the security and humanitarian challenges that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region are facing at the moment, I am encouraged by the initial progress in several areas and by the strong will demonstrated by the signatory countries to contribute to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Allow me to share some of the positive political steps that the signatories of the Framework and key international institutions have taken since February.

At the national level, in May President Kabila established the national oversight mechanism, which will oversee the implementation of the commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the Framework. I very much hope — and I made this clear to President Kabila — that the national oversight mechanism will include a large cross-section of civil society in carrying out its mandate. At the same time, national reforms that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has agreed to implement under the Framework need to begin in earnest, and be supported by the international community.

I would like to welcome the recent initiative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to launch a mineral certification programme in an effort to stop the illegal exploitation of minerals and prevent armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from benefiting from it. This is an important first step, which deserves the full support of the international community.

At the regional level, the first meeting of the regional oversight mechanism took place in Addis Ababa on 26 May and established a technical support committee mandated to develop the benchmarks and indicators of progress for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, among other tasks. The committee is made up of senior representatives of the signatory countries of the Framework, who have met twice so far, on 24 June and earlier this week on 22 and 23 July, under the co-chairmanship of my Special Adviser Modibo Touré and the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes, Ambassador Boubacar Diarra. Participants also included senior officials from ICGLR, the South African Development Community, MONUSCO and the United Nations Department of Political Affairs.

I am glad to report that the committee has made solid progress in developing benchmarks and indicators of progress. These may still be improved, but they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound, with a clear indication of responsibilities. In accordance with its immediate mandate, the committee focused on regional benchmarks, but also provided critical inputs for international benchmarks and national benchmarks. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Committee and the leaders of the region who responded positively to my request to each to appoint one of their closest advisors to represent them in this work.

I will present the benchmarks developed by the committee to the leaders of the region during the next ICGLR summit, scheduled for 31 July in Nairobi ahead of the next meeting of the regional oversight mechanism, which, as the Secretary-General has said, should formally adopt them in

September here in New York. In the meantime, I will of course continue consultations with all those involved in the implementation process of the Framework to ensure that the proposed benchmarks meet their concerns.

Two significant regional meetings took place recently, with positive outcomes that I would like to share. The first was the regional consultation on women, peace, security and development in the Great Lakes Region, which I organized, in collaboration with Femmes Africa Solidarité and the ICGLR, from 9 to 11 July in Bujumbura, Burundi. More than 100 women leaders from signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework attended the conference, including the Gender Ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi.

Members will recall that I made it clear from the beginning that, as Special Envoy, I intended to implement a top-down and bottom-up comprehensive approach, whereby I will be working, on the one hand, with political leaders and, on the other, with the people of the region to encourage peace, security and development. It was important to listen to the Great Lakes women's perspectives on the peace process, as women represent the majority of the population of the region and are, together with children, the first victims of the ongoing conflict. I gave them the opportunity to suggest possible benchmarks and indicators, which were later submitted to the technical support committee for consideration.

Perhaps I should explain that, not too surprisingly, the technical support committee is entirely male in its composition.

I will continue to encourage women-led initiatives in the region through the establishment of a communications platform, through which experts and donors could provide technical advice and funds to women's projects in support of the "framework of hope".

As President Kim mentioned, the second meeting took place on 18 and 19 July, in Addis Ababa. The African Union, the World Bank and my Office organized a ministerial meeting on regional approaches to development in countries of the Great Lakes in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The meeting was attended by Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of countries of the Great Lakes Region, regional economic communities, partner countries, international organizations and civil society organizations. This proved to be a very good forum for discussion, building on the historic joint visit of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim to the Great Lakes region in May.

Participants noted that deepened regional economic cooperation and integration and enhanced regional infrastructure and trade could foster economic inclusion and create opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups, women and youth, as well as strengthen political agreements by delivering tangible results. They indicated a number of priority regional interventions in energy and transport infrastructure, agriculture, cross-border trade, economic development, and social sectors. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Addis Ababa participants and also President Jim Yong Kim for his commitment of \$1 billion in support of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which effectively turns it into a Framework for peace, security, cooperation and development.

All these steps, although they may appear minor to the millions of people on the ground who are eagerly waiting to see peace established and their lives changing, are concrete affirmation of the determination of the international community to try new avenues for sustainable peace and stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

I will soon come back to the Council with further elements for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which will be built on three critical pillars: political and security, humanitarian and development. Elements of this strategy will include sustained confidence-building measures among leaders in the region, joint efforts with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for MONUSCO and international partners to support the national dialogue process in Democratic Republic of the Congo; cross-border development projects, with a strong focus on civil society, youth and women's groups; and modalities to support difficult mediation, building on the Kampala dialogue, within the limits of my mandate, including strict compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law.

I am fully aware of the challenges that the Governments of the region and the Security Council face in advancing peace in the Great Lakes region. My role, I hope, will be a modest but catalytic contribution to helping restore peace and build hope for the future in a complex environment. But such a strategy and the Council's engagement with the Great Lakes region will bear fruit only if all actors involved at the local, national, regional and international levels push in the same direction and if — let me reiterate — there is an immediate cessation of hostilities in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I believe that there is some political momentum at the moment. We need to create and encourage space for dialogue, and support for tough decisions. We need to tell each other the truth, quietly when necessary but firmly, and stick to our commitments to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework if we are to make a real difference this time. I have been having frank conversations with the leaders of the region and I intend to continue to do so in the coming months, including next week when I meet them in Nairobi. I encourage the members of the Security Council to keep the Great Lakes region high on their agenda and to maintain the current momentum, including perhaps through a visit to the Great Lakes region in the coming months.

Let me conclude by warmly thanking the Security Council members, the Secretary-General and my United Nations colleagues, as well as regional and international partners, who have continuously expressed and provided support to my work. I know I can count on them to try to move the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agenda forward, and I am really grateful for that.