

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the Kenya presidency, the Security Council will hold a ministerial-level debate on the Great Lakes region, on the theme “Supporting the renewed commitment of the Great Lakes countries in seeking sustainable solutions to the root causes and drivers of conflict”, on Wednesday, 20 October 2021.

To guide the discussion, Kenya has prepared a concept note for the benefit of members wishing to participate in the debate (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and concept note could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Martin **Kimani**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 13 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council high-level debate on the Great Lakes region, on the theme “Supporting the renewed commitment of the Great Lakes countries in seeking sustainable solutions to the root causes and drivers of conflict”, to be held on 20 October 2021

1. Kenya will convene a Security Council ministerial-level debate on the Great Lakes region. The objective of the debate will be to encourage the Council to unite in supporting regional governments to find solutions for dealing with the root causes and drivers of endemic conflict in the region, with a special focus on ways to curb the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources.
2. Countries of the Great Lakes region continue to be afflicted by insecurity despite continuing national, regional and international peace efforts. In the past decade alone, seven countries in the region have experienced varying levels of armed conflict, including some protracted situations, such as in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.
3. In 2005, during a high-level meeting on peace and security in Africa, the Security Council, through resolution [1625 \(2005\)](#), stressed the critical importance of a regional approach to conflict prevention. It paid particular attention to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and to taking action against illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources, which contributes to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict.
4. In a renewed effort to address the “root causes of conflict and put an end to recurring cycles of violence” in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, 11 countries in the region and the international community recommitted to consolidating peace and security and promoting cooperation between the countries in the region by signing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region in 2013. The Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report every six months on the implementation of the commitments under the Framework.
5. Over the past few years, countries in the Great Lakes region have made progress. The overall peaceful transfers of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as the signing and implementation of peace agreements in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan, illustrate this positive momentum.
6. 2021 has also witnessed positive progress in the normalizing of bilateral relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, marked by the signing of various memorandums of understanding aimed at finding lasting solutions to the problem of armed groups, especially in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The recent establishment of the Contact and Coordination Group represents another important step in regional efforts to identify and implement non-military solutions to the drivers of cross-border conflict, in complement to enhanced military action by the countries of the region.
7. The Peacebuilding Commission has also continued its commitment to supporting regional socioeconomic cooperation as a key component of building and sustaining peace and fostering sustainable development. Its strong commitment to funding the women and peace and security agenda and Member States’ positive engagement are also good examples of how a broader perspective on advancing regional stability is being recognized by all stakeholders.

8. Despite these efforts, some challenges remain. In particular, the linkages between natural resources and conflict remain a key challenge for many countries of the Great Lakes region. In the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 25 June 2007 ([S/PRST/2007/22](#)), the Security Council notes that, in specific armed conflict situations, the exploitation, trafficking and illicit trade of natural resources have played a role in areas where they have contributed to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict.

9. With the support of the United Nations, the region continues to take measures to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources and to strengthen the transparent and lawful management thereof. In this regard, and building on the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, organized a high-level workshop on natural resources, held in Khartoum from 31 August to 2 September 2021, during which all stakeholders agreed on the need to strengthen ownership at the national level and to accelerate the pace of the effective implementation of the Regional Initiative. Participants also agreed to prioritize the implementation of a regional strategy on gold artisanal mining in view of linkages with the funding of armed groups. They recommended strengthening cooperation to fight impunity for crimes related to natural resources, including through the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network established in 2016.

10. The sustainable management of natural resources is also one of the priority objectives in the three-year action plan to operationalize the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (see [S/2020/1168](#)), which the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region will present to the Security Council during the debate.

11. The matter is also expected to be considered further during the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which is scheduled to take place in Kinshasa on a date to be determined.

Objectives

12. The high-level briefing on the Great Lakes region will provide an opportunity for the Security Council and participating countries to renew their commitment to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to express their support to the implementation of the priority actions identified in the United Nations regional strategy and its action plan. This will be accomplished through:

- (a) Promotion of a shared vision of regional peace, security and socioeconomic development;
- (b) Renewed engagement to address the drivers of conflict and instability, with a specific focus on harnessing the productivity of natural resources;
- (c) Promotion of lawful, transparent and effective control and management of natural resources in order to prevent the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources;
- (d) Commitment to supporting sustainable disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region;
- (e) Renewed commitment to promoting the women and peace and security agenda in the region, notably in relation to promoting the meaningful participation of women in peace and development and with regard to strengthening the resilience of

women and girls in confronting the economic impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic;

(f) Commitment to supporting existing international and regional mechanisms aimed at enhancing good-neighbourliness, multisectoral cooperation and regional peace and development, such as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and its governing bodies and the mechanisms of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Guiding questions

13. The following questions will serve to guide the debate:

(a) How can Security Council members, both individually and collectively, support the implementation of the actions identified in the United Nations regional strategy and its action plan?

(b) What additional efforts can be made by peacekeeping missions and special political missions in resource-endowed countries to prevent the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources, including by disrupting criminal networks?

(c) What can the regional countries and the international community do to strengthen cross-border security and support the fight against transborder crime and terrorism?

(d) How can the region and the international community ensure sustained means to ensure the long-term, sustainable national and regional coordination of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement programmes?

(e) How can the region and the international community support the strengthening of the capacity of key State institutions, particularly national security and customs structures, to ensure the effective control and management of natural resources?

(f) How can the region increase the participation of international financial institutions and the private sector in funding projects and programmes in the mining and extractive sectors?

(g) What role can national, regional and international stakeholders play in transforming the productive use of natural resources in the Great Lakes region to directly contribute to post-conflict recovery, mutually shared socioeconomic development and regional prosperity?

Format of the meeting

14. The event will be a high-level debate, at ministerial level, and will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Raychelle Omamo. The debate will take place in person on Wednesday, 20 October 2021, at 10 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

Briefers

- Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region
- Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, João Samuel Caholo
- Assistant Secretary-General for Africa
- Representative, civil society organization (to be confirmed)

Expected outcome

Presidential statement
