



Briefing on the Great Lakes Region, 19 April 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt
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Thank you. I also thank Special Envoy Xia and PBC Chair Simonovic for their informative briefings. I welcome the representatives of Rwanda, Burundi and The Democratic Republic of the Congo to the meeting.

Since the beginning of this year, the Council has been engaged in addressing the deeply concerning security situation in the Eastern DRC, that threatens the stability of the Great Lakes region.

The Security Council has been united in its messages to actors involved in the eastern DRC crisis while actively supporting ongoing regional initiatives. The Nairobi and Luanda processes are key towards achieving long-term sustainable peace and security. We reiterate the need for sustained commitment by all parties towards their successful implementation.

Malta acknowledges the African Union Peace and Security Council's extensive engagement in the region. The recent endorsement of the final communiqué from last February's summit of the Eastern African Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region represents an important joint endeavour.

The PSC Framework remains the best structure for achieving peace and stability in the region and needs to be translated into reality. In this regard,



we look forward to the holding of the regional monitoring mechanism's 11th meeting, next month.

We also acknowledge the work of other sub-regional organisations such as the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community as they are constructively contributing to growth and stability in the region.

As a Member State of the European Union, Malta is deeply committed towards complementing peace efforts in the region. In line with the UN strategy, the respect for democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law all lie at the heart of the recently adopted Renewed EU Great Lakes Strategy. This will be translated into the promotion of free and fair elections, transitional justice, and the fight against impunity and corruption – all key priorities for Malta. In this same vein, the EU's efforts are complemented with the Global Gateway initiative in the region.

Efforts must focus on breaking the cycle of violence in the region. It is crucial that we place local populations – women, youth, marginalised groups, civil society, and the private sector – at the front and centre of our purpose. As we encourage the DRC and Rwanda to return to dialogue, we also urge all armed actors to lay down their weapons, de-escalate and engage in the disarmament process.



In order to successfully tackle the root causes of conflict, it is essential that proper management of natural resources is part of our collective efforts. We applaud the role played by Special Envoy Xia to the region in this regard.

Malta remains deeply concerned with the humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC. As Special Envoy described, it is devastating. Conflict and climate induced food insecurity, among other issues, continue to cause suffering for some of the region's most vulnerable population groups. Women and children, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons, remain disproportionately impacted as ever.

As armed groups continue to control and ravage local communities in the eastern DRC, we condemn their actions in the strongest terms and call for them to lay down their arms. Malta also deplores the reported instances of movement restrictions and access denials for medical, and humanitarian organisations, seeking to deliver lifesaving aid to those most in need – often in the face of grave danger.

To conclude, we must prevent history from repeating itself and work tirelessly to heal the collective trauma of generations of people who have grown accustomed only to conflict and insecurity and strive to bring them back to peace and stability. I thank you.