



Security Council briefing on the Great Lakes, 17 October 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Mr Darren Camilleri

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I thank Special Envoy Xia, ICGLR Executive Secretary Caholo and Ms Malimukono for their briefings. I also welcome DRC and Rwanda representatives.

In echoing the Secretary-General observations contained in the latest report, we applaud the significant strides taken to deepen regional ownership in seeking solutions to the conflict and encourage further enhanced coordination between existing and forthcoming regional peace initiatives.

We encourage all parties to commit to genuine and good-faith dialogue and we call for de-escalation of tensions and for the parties to abstain from engaging in inflammatory public discourse. Particularly during the electoral process, leaders bear the responsibility of setting an example and adopting a conciliatory tone.

The security situation in eastern DRC remains concerning. This situation has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, with the perpetration of appalling human rights violations, including gender-based sexual violence, and the widespread use and recruitment of children. These constitute a severe threat to the future of the DRC and its neighbours.



The recently adopted Presidential Statement demonstrates this Council's commitment to work towards a responsible withdrawal of MONUSCO.

On a positive note, we commend the initiatives undertaken by several countries to bolster cross-border cooperation in economic activities. This will undoubtedly be conducive to peacebuilding and fostering constructive interdependence.

We are also heartened by the initial indications from missions of the Group's Operational Cell. They suggest that some foreign armed group members are open to disarm, demobilise, and repatriate to their countries of origin without conditions. We reiterate the Secretary-General's call for seizing this opportunity promptly and for swiftly enhancing national capacities for disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration to effectively receive and support ex-combatants and their dependents.

Regarding the root causes of conflict, the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources from eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region continue to be significant contributors to the ongoing crisis.

We support how the UN Special Envoy has placed this objective at the heart of his mandate and welcome initiatives such as those mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, particularly the support for a more responsible management of the gold supply chain.

President



The humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region remains of great concern. Large scale forced displacements have resulted in increased humanitarian and protection needs for millions. Some 25.8 million people in the DRC, and 7.7 million people in South Sudan are facing acute food insecurity.

A substantial challenge lies in the return of millions of IDPs to their homes. We underscore the continued efforts of UNHCR and the Office of the Special Envoy in revitalising the tripartite mechanism for the return of refugees between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Concurrently, the IOM persists in providing multi-sectoral assistance to individuals affected by displacement and host communities.

In conclusion, President, we firmly believe that the principles and commitments enshrined in the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework remain pertinent. We welcome the outcomes of the 11th meeting of the regional oversight mechanism, particularly the decision to reinvigorate it. In this regard, an independent, frank, and sincere assessment of the Framework's implementation and the subsequent recommendations will undoubtedly enhance its effectiveness.

I thank you.