

3. The situation in the Great Lakes region

During the period under review, the Council held two meetings on the situation in the Great Lakes region, both in the form of briefings, on 19 April and 17 October 2023.⁸² The Council did not adopt any decisions under this item in 2023. More information about the meetings, including on participants and speakers, is provided in the table below. In addition, Council members held informal consultations of the whole in connection with this item.⁸³

In 2023, the Council heard two briefings from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, and one each from the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the President of the Concertation des Collectifs des Associations Féminines de la Région des Grands Lacs, a civil society organization. The Council also heard a briefing and received written advice from the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.⁸⁴

In his briefings to the Council further to the biannual reports of the Secretary-General,⁸⁵ the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General focused on the status of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region at the tenth anniversary since its signing in 2013, and the activities of his Office in support of the implementation of the Framework.

On 19 April, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General noted that while a fragile calm had taken root in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, serious risks continued to exist.⁸⁶ The retreat by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) from occupied areas remained incomplete and the disarmament and cantonment of combatants, provided for under the Luanda road map, was yet to be achieved. He noted that a negotiated political solution was still lagging behind and that the risk of a resumption of hostilities remained a genuine possibility. The

⁸² For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. I.

⁸³ Informal consultations of the whole were held in connection with this item following the two briefings on 19 April and 17 October 2023, during which Council members were briefed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. See [A/78/2](#), part II, chap. 10.

⁸⁴ See [S/PV.9307](#) and [S/2023/752](#). For more information about written advice to the Council transmitted by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, see part IX, sect. VII.

⁸⁵ See [S/2023/237](#) and [S/2023/730](#).

⁸⁶ See [S/PV.9307](#). For more information about the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, see part I, sect. 4.

Special Envoy called for support to regional peace efforts, including the Luanda process, aimed at re-establishing peaceful relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and the Nairobi process, focused on convening political consultations and on military efforts. On the way forward, the Special Envoy affirmed that he would continue to underscore the imperative of pursuing dialogue and a political solution and support the operational cell on non-military measures, with a view to disarming and repatriating foreign armed combatants present in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to strengthening the hosting and reintegration capacities in countries of origin. Lastly, the Special Envoy announced stepping up efforts to implement the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region and the flagship initiatives, which also aimed to ensure greater participation of women and young people in dialogue and peace processes, as well as to advocate for more transparent management of natural resources.

At the same meeting, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission encouraged the Council to consider, *inter alia*, continuing to firmly support regional peace initiatives, including the Luanda and Nairobi processes, as well as the inter-Congolese dialogue.⁸⁷ He encouraged the Council to call for the implementation by all States of the commitments within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, emphasize inclusivity as key to advancing peacebuilding objectives, express support for efforts towards a sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, as well as for partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, and to continue to reiterate the importance of a strategic and coherent approach by the United Nations and stakeholders in the region to sustain peacebuilding gains, in particular in the context of the transition of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

In his second briefing on 17 October, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General stated that the security and humanitarian situations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo had not improved.⁸⁸ Large-scale hostilities in North Kivu had resumed, the risk of a direct confrontation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda remained real and the number of displaced persons and refugees was ever-increasing. Commending the ongoing

⁸⁷ See [S/PV.9307](#).

⁸⁸ See [S/PV.9440](#).

commitment of regional actors and the international community for their efforts in promoting peace and security, the Special Envoy reported on his visits to the countries in the region to advocate peace and mobilize partners to find a peaceful solution to the region's challenges. The Special Envoy reiterated his call to all armed groups to lay down their weapons and to the Congolese armed groups to re-join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. He further recalled his appeal to all member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to implement the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution, as well as the regional tracing mechanism arising from it, given the strong correlation between the illicit exploitation and trade of artisanal gold and the financing of armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, the United Nations continued to promote the effective participation of women, as well as young people, in political dialogue. Finally, the Special Envoy reaffirmed the importance of prioritizing diplomacy and dialogue in bringing about peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

The Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region focused on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, noting the resumption of clashes between the M-23 and local armed groups in violation of the Rwanda ceasefire of 23 November 2022. The security situation was also characterized by targeted assassinations and the killing of civilians by the M-23 in areas under its control. Moreover, the Executive Secretary noted that the Luanda road map and the Nairobi process were at a standstill following the refusal of the M-23 to withdraw from all the areas that it occupied. The Executive Secretary called on the Council to also pay greater attention to what was happening in the Central African Republic, Kenya and the Sudan, and drew the Council's attention to the activities of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a-Islamic State in northern Mozambique, which continued to negatively impact the security situation in neighbouring regions of Tanzania. Concluding, he called on the Council and the United Nations to support the Luanda and Nairobi processes and on the international community to support the institutions on the ground, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes, in implementing all those initiatives.

In her briefing, the President of the Concertation des Collectifs des Associations féminines de la région des Grands Lacs, a network of 11 women's collectives from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, pointed to the high level of militarization and the recurring conflicts in the region which threatened its stability and had severe consequences, especially for the protection of civilians, women, children, persons with disabilities and older people. She highlighted three major problems that emerged from the precarious security situation in the region: the low cohesion of cross-border communities; poor protection of women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence; and limited political spaces and spaces for dialogue for women's voices. To that end, she called for support for marginalized groups, including women, young people and persons with disabilities; the equal, direct and significant participation of civil society, young people, women and persons with disabilities in all peace processes supported by the United Nations and international partners; support for local and community peace-building initiatives based on gender-sensitive needs; support for initiatives responding to humanitarian emergencies for displaced women, particularly those resulting from the conflicts in North Kivu; support for the creation of a regional mechanism for the involvement of women in mining and women's entrepreneurship and the promotion and institutionalization of a community psychosocial approach in peace and security efforts, conflict prevention and the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Concluding, she also called on the Council to continue to prioritize the situation of women and girls in the Great Lakes region.

During their discussions on the Great Lakes region in 2023, Council members and representatives of Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo expressed concern with the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and called for the cessation of activities and disarmament of armed groups in the region.⁸⁹ Council members and other participants also exchanged views on the role of foreign actors in supporting the armed groups and the impact of the illicit exploitation of natural resources, as one of the drivers of the conflict in the region and an impediment to its development. Speakers also appealed for dialogue and an easing of tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.⁹⁰ With regards to efforts to address the conflict,

⁸⁹ See [S/PV.9307](#) and [S/PV.9440](#).

⁹⁰ See [S/PV.9307](#) and [S/PV.9440](#).

delegations expressed support for the peace initiatives of the African Union, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community. They also discussed the importance of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution and called for the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework as means for achieving inclusive political dialogue and addressing the root causes of the conflict.⁹¹ In this context, several Council members also highlighted the need to ensure meaningful participation of women in political processes in the Great Lakes region.⁹²

Meetings: The situation in the Great Lakes region, 2023

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decisions and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.9307 19 April 2023	Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2023/237)		Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Permanent Representative of Croatia (Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission)	13 Council members, ^a all invitees	
S/PV.9440 17 October 2023	Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2023/730)		Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda	Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, President of the Concertation des Collectifs des Associations féminines de la région des Grands Lacs	13 Council members, ^a all invitees	

⁹¹ See [S/PV.9307](#) and [S/PV.9440](#).

⁹² See [S/PV.9307](#) (Japan, Brazil, Switzerland, Malta, United Arab Emirates and Ecuador); [S/PV.9440](#) (Japan, Switzerland, United States, Ecuador and Brazil).

^a Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Ghana (also on behalf of Gabon and Mozambique), Japan, Malta, Switzerland, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States.