

AFRICAN UNION

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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 974TM MEETING 22 JANUARY 2021 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM. (CMLXXIV)

COMMUNIQUE

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 974th meeting held on 22 January 2021, on the situation in the Great Lakes Region,

The Peace and Security Council.

Noting the opening statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the AU, H.E. Ambassador Baye Moctar Diop, in his capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of January 2021, and the briefing made by Mr. Balagizi Gonzague Patrice, on behalf of the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for the Great Lakes Region and Burundi, H.E. Basile Ikouebe; **also noting** the statements made by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the UN Office to the AU, H.E. Madam Hanna Tetteh; as well as by representatives of the East African Community and of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;

Recalling the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Region, signed in February 2013, as well as the Communique of the meeting of the Guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region, held on **T1** January 2017;

Also recalling all its previous decisions and pronouncements on the situation in the Great Lakes Region, particularly communique [PSC/PR/COMM. (CMIII)] adopted at its 903rd meeting held on 10 January 2020 on the situation in the Great Lakes Region; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Welcomes** the positive developments taking place in the Great Lakes Region, including the various initiatives to further enhance inter-state cooperation, promote stability, peace and development and building mutual trust and confidence between and among the countries of the Region; **also welcomes** the steady progress in the ongoing transitional process in Sudan and in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the peaceful transfer of power in Burundi, the normalization of relations between Rwanda and Uganda, the commitment by Burundi and Rwanda to work together in addressing the security challenges along their common border, the peaceful settlement of the border dispute between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, as well as the return of internally displaced persons and the repatriation of refugees in Burundi and South Sudan; **further welcomes** the removal, on 4 December 2020, of Burundi, from the agenda of the United Nations (UN) Security Council;

2. **Commends** the leaders of the countries of the Great Lakes Region for their unwavering commitment to promote good neighborliness, peace, security, stability and socio-economic development in the Region with the support of the Guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the DRC and the Region; in this context, **welcomes** the confidence-building initiatives by the defence and security forces of the countries of the Region, and **encourages** them to further strengthen their cooperation and collaboration, in order to more effectively fight and eliminate all negative forces and non-state armed groups in the Region;

3. **Looks forward** to the outcome of the planned Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, which will be expected to provide the necessary platform for facilitating cross- border trade and also expedite economic integration in the region;

4. **Commends** Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda for the successful organization of peaceful elections despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and **encourages** them to continue to deepen and consolidate democracy in their countries;

5. **Expresses** its gratitude to United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and its Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), and their troop and police contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs), for their commitment to restore lasting peace, security and stability in the DRC and the Region as a whole; in the same context, **pays tribute** to the MONUSCO and SADC FIB personnel for their sacrifices and **expresses condolences** to the families of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and **wishes** speedy recovery to those sustaining injuries;

6. **Welcomes** UN Security Council Resolution 2556 (2020) adopted on 18 December 2020, extending the mandate of MONUSCO alongside FIB until 20 December 2021;

7. **Notes with deep concern**, the continued threat to peace, security, stability and socioeconomic development of the Region that is posed by the numerous negative forces and non- state armed groups operating in the Region, as well as the threat posed by those non-state armed groups that are active in the neighboring countries, including in the Central African Republic; and **reiterates** the determination of the AU, working in close cooperation with the rest of the international community, to take appropriate measures, including the imposition of targeted sanctions, against these groups;

8. **Underscores the importance** of enhanced cooperation and collaboration between and among the relevant Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs) in addressing the transnational nature of some of the threats to peace, security and stability in the Region;

9. **Encourages** the Governments of the countries of the Region to be more responsive, more accountable and to holistically address the fundamental root causes and drivers of violent conflicts in the Region, as well as to deepen and consolidate democracy and to promote good governance;

10. **Also encourages** the countries of the region to redouble their efforts in combating illegal exploration of mineral resources; fighting corruption, money laundering, trans-national organized crime, and to invest more in building the institutional capacity of their border management and control, as well as their justice and law enforcement agencies, in order for these institutions and agencies to more effectively discharge their respective mandates; in this

context, **encourages** the counties of the Region to make use of the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Centre;

11. **Commends** the countries of the region for the efforts being deployed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and encourages them to continue working with the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC);

12. **Welcomes** the positive developments concerning the region at the level of the UN, including the presentation of the UN Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, and the exit strategy of the MONUSCO, and **stresses** on the vitality of cooperation and coordination between the AU and UN with regards the efforts to enhance stability in the region and pursue its development potential;
13. **Reaffirms** the unwavering commitment of the AU to continue to support the efforts of the Region in the search for durable peace, security, stability and socio-economic development;
14. **Requests** the Chairperson of the Commission to urgently address the institutional capacity challenges facing the AU Liaison Office in Burundi, including in terms of human, financial and material resources, with a view to enabling the Office to more effectively discharge its mandate and to also further enhance the visibility of the AU presence in the Great Lakes Region;
15. **Agrees** to hold a meeting on 27 February 2021 to commemorate the 8th anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Region, in order to review the status of implementation of the Framework Agreement;
16. **Reiterates its requests** for the AU Commission to provide quarterly briefings to Council on the situation in the Great Lakes Region;
17. **Decides** to undertake a field mission to the Great Lakes Region as soon as possible; and
18. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the situation in the Great Lakes Region.