

# Speech: Stability in the Great Lakes Region

Thank you, Mr President. And thank you, Personal Envoy Djinnit for your briefing today, for the SG's report and for all your very diligent work and your strong personal dedication on these issues since 2014. We appreciate everything you've done and we wish you the best of success for the future.

It was particularly welcome to hear today both about your recent successes and to be reminded of all you've achieved over the last five years. We particularly welcome your success in securing the voluntary repatriation of fighters from Rwanda and also of M23 fighters from Uganda. That is an important achievement and as you said, it shows that we can make progress on these really difficult issues.

You also, in setting out the six areas that you'd focused on over the last five years today, I think you helped set the agenda for your successor when he takes over. And I'd like to highlight three of those in particular:

First, we warmly welcome the emphasis you have placed on promoting the participation of women in political life and in peace processes, and we strongly agree with the call you made just now to support the region's efforts to achieve a minimum quota of 30% of women's representation in political processes by 2020 – in time for the 20 year anniversary of 1325.

Second, very much agree with you about the importance of the rule of law and human rights. And in this regard, we strongly support your plans for a high level conference on justice and good governance in May and you will have our full support for that conference.

And then third – and this is a point that my US colleague touched on as well – we very much agree with you on the importance of tackling the exploitation of natural resources, in particular by armed groups in eastern DRC. It's very good that you have initiated political discussions with the countries in the region on this issue and I think it will be very important that that dialogue continues under your successor.

Mr President, let me just touch very briefly on three of the country-specific issues that are mentioned in your report:.

On the DRC, of course we we join the Special Envoy in our commendation of the Congolese people for exercising their democratic right to vote in a peaceful manner in the recent elections.

But we all know that democracy is a process, not an event, and it will be vital that all stakeholders in the DRC remain focused on supporting a more stable and inclusive political environment in the DRC. And we fully agree with the conclusions in the Secretary-General's report on the importance of resolving the issue of foreign armed groups and their dependents in the DRC

and regional issues involving refugee populations. Regional dialogue will be vital in finding solutions that respect the fundamental human rights of all those involved in or affected by conflict.

Second, turning to the Central African Republic, we attach great importance to ongoing efforts by the parties to implement the political agreement for peace and reconciliation and would encourage all stakeholders to consider what role the PSCF may be able to play in supporting this process.

And then finally, on Burundi, we think an inclusive dialogue will be a vital precursor to credible and inclusive elections. We welcome all the work you have done on this issue. All international partners should continue to support the EAC in their efforts to end the political crisis in Burundi and preserve the Arusha Accords.

Again, we encourage all stakeholders to consider whether the PSCF can play an enhanced role in promoting dialogue in Burundi and to coordinate their efforts with the PSCF in this regard.

Finally, in conclusion, we look forward to hearing your successor's plans to engage further with regional heads of state and government, picking up on the six themes you've outlined – in particular the three I think I've focused on. And as you have shown in your tenure in this role, the Special Envoy role has an invaluable part to play in supporting and strengthening the partnerships that will underpin greater regional stability. Thank you for everything you have done.

Thank you.