

Security Council Debate on the Situation in the Great Lakes Region: DRC and the Great Lakes, July 25th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Asselborn, Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the United Nations.

Luxembourg welcomes the initiative of the United States in organizing this Security Council debate on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. The moment is particularly significant, and your presence, Mr. Secretary, lends it special weight.

I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Envoy, Ms. Mary Robinson, the President of the World Bank, Mr. Kim and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Mr. Lamamra, as well as the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, for their statements. I thank them especially for their sincere commitment to the cause of peace, security and cooperation in the region.

Luxembourg fully subscribes to the statement to be delivered by Mr. Pierre Vimont on behalf of the European Union.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region have for too long been ravaged by conflict. Millions have died — the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo just cited a figure of 6 million deaths over the past 15 years. Millions have been displaced and millions prevented from living in dignity. And armed groups, notably the Mouvement du 23 mars, continue to plague the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This is no longer acceptable. Things must change. We must break the cycle of violence. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework signed in the 11+4 format in Addis Ababa on 24 February marks, we sincerely hope, a defining turning point in the consolidation of peace and stability in the region. That agreement would not have been possible or its follow-up assured without the support of the United Nations. I commend the crucial role played in that regard by the Secretary-General and his team. And we should also praise the support that has been provided by the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community.

The Framework has one essential merit — it takes into account the root causes of conflict. It rightly emphasizes ownership by the countries of the region of a process that must end the recurring violence and pave the way for truly dynamic regional economic development. We hope it will live up to the name given it by Mary Robinson, inspired by the Irish poet Seamus Heaney — a framework of hope, a framework that can bring hope back to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region and erase the memory of what Ms. Robinson just described as a lack of horror at what is going on right now.

It is time for the Framework to be resolutely implemented. In this context, we welcome the recent initiatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The national oversight mechanism for monitoring implementation of the commitments made under the Framework is in place. The first national plans for security sector reform, particularly of the army, have been laid out. We also welcome the establishment of a new Independent National Electoral Commission, which paves the way for organizing provincial and local elections. A professional and loyal national army that can protect the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and promote human rights is also an imperative.

In that regard, it is incumbent on the country's authorities to continue their investigations into

violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, including sexual violence, committed by elements of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. The focused implementation of the action plan signed on 4 October 2012 with the United Nations, aimed at halting and preventing the recruitment and exploitation of children, and the use of sexual violence against them, by the military and security forces, must be seen in the same context.

We should recall that the signing of the Framework was accompanied by an overhaul of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), including by the establishment of the Force Intervention Brigade. The deterrent effect of the Brigade has already been felt on the ground, and we welcome that. In line with resolution 2098 (2013), the Brigade will have a key role to play in helping to achieve the goal of reducing the threat that armed groups pose to the authority of the State and the safety of civilians in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In general, support for security sector reform and the protection of civilians, especially women and children, must remain at the heart of MONUSCO's mandate.

At the regional level, we support Special Envoy Robinson's proactive approach and her intention to design a comprehensive political strategy for implementation of the Framework in the coming months, based on indicators agreed on by all signatories. We will have to remain vigilant to sustain positive momentum. The follow-up orchestrated by Ms. Robinson needs the benefit of the Council's continued attention.

One issue we are particularly concerned about is the ongoing illegal exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly by armed groups; it is a major source of instability. We welcome the positive steps taken by the Congolese authorities in the area. In general, we encourage them to redouble their efforts in the area of economic governance. As the Framework states, regional cooperation must be strengthened, including through deepening economic integration, with special attention to the issue of the exploitation of natural resources.

Lastly, I would like to stress how important it is that the partners of the region focus on cooperation on development and combating poverty. Indeed, security and development go hand in hand. I encourage the World Bank and the countries of the region to move forward speedily with projects that support regional development priorities, in the wake of President Kim's announcement in Kinshasa on 23 May of a pledge of \$1 billion in zero-interest loans. I am thinking in particular of projects in the areas of agriculture, hydroelectric power and infrastructure, which can enable cross-border economic activity to expand. As Ms. Robinson emphasized, the ongoing political process can succeed only if people benefit quickly from tangible peace dividends.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the call to the signatories of the Framework to implement, diligently and in good faith, all the commitments they have undertaken, including the commitment not to tolerate or provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups. This is a matter of responsibility and credibility. In doing that, they can count on the support of the international community in initiating a virtuous circle that will enable the people of the region to at last emerge from an unacceptable situation that has lasted all too long. The opportunity is exceptional. The time to seize it is now.