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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

A Regional Approach to Development in the Great Lakes

International Conference

July 18-19 2013

Purpose

The conference and subsequent actions are intended to support implementation of the *Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC and the region*, agreed between DRC and its neighbors under the auspices of the AU and the UN on February 24, 2013.

The conference will bring together national governments in of the Great Lakes countries and their development partners, continental and regional organizations, and representatives of the private sector and civil society, to exchange views on how best to support development in the Great Lakes region utilizing a regional approach. It will not be a pledging conference, but will aim to build consensus on the way forward and identify priority next steps.

Key outcomes will be: a) agreement among partners and Great Lakes countries to enhance collaboration; b) identification and endorsement of short-term interventions to foster peaceful co-existence among communities in border areas through bringing about tangible improvements in their livelihoods; and c) development of proposals of longer term initiatives to boost inclusive economic growth and demonstrate the benefits of cross-border cooperation and shared prosperity.

Background

Despite numerous peace initiatives, instability and conflict have plagued eastern DRC for many years, resulting in loss of life, displacement and general insecurity. Shifting alliances, formation and splintering of multiple rebel groups, the competing aims of internal and external actors, and competition for access to, and control of, mineral and other resources have resulted in repeated cycles of violence and a continuing severe humanitarian crisis. While instability in DRC is a concern in its own right, it also represents a destabilizing factor for neighboring countries, especially in border areas.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC and the region, signed by representatives of DRC, CAR, Angola, Burundi, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania, is a recognition by DRC and its neighbors that regional security and stability depend on their concerted and collective action.

- Under the Framework, countries in the Great Lakes committed to refrain from interfering in other countries, and to neither tolerate nor provide assistance and/or support of any kind to armed groups.
- The DRC committed to prevent armed groups from destabilizing neighboring countries, fast-track security sector reform (army and police), and consolidate state authority in eastern parts of the country. It also pledged to make progress with decentralization; further economic development, including the expansion of infrastructure and delivery of basic social services; promote reconciliation; and continue with the reform of government institutions.
- The Framework calls for a national oversight mechanism in DRC to oversee the implementation of the commitments. The UN, AU, African Development Bank, the World Bank and other international institutions have agreed to support this mechanism.

Given that it involves multiple countries, the Framework provides an opportunity to support stability through regional approaches. Indeed, deepened regional economic cooperation and integration is a key element. While national actions are essential, enhanced regional infrastructure and trade could foster economic inclusion and create opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups, as well as strengthen political agreements by delivering tangible results. The practical benefits of closer economic cooperation would accrue to both DRC and its neighbors.

The Framework also allows for a renewed focus on development and on policies and interventions that address the causes of conflict. Previous attempts to broker peace and stability have predominantly focused on security, with relatively little attention on improving livelihoods or providing opportunities for economic advancement on a sustainable basis. Yet many of the underlying causes of the conflict in DRC lie in longstanding tensions over ethnicity, citizenship, and access to land and resources, exacerbated by lack of economic opportunity and the failure of the state to provide basic services or governance.

Women are the main actors for many economic and social activities, but are particularly vulnerable in the absence of effective state institutions, and are disadvantaged in terms of land and property ownership. Although the levels of violence and rape suffered by women have provoked international outrage, they still lack protection of basic rights or access to justice. A special focus on gender and women is therefore fundamental to progress in DRC.

Conference organization

The conference will be organized around five main themes—expanding regional infrastructure; catalyzing economic development; promoting social welfare and cohesion; peace and security considerations; and governance. In addition, it will address four cross-cutting issues—capacity development, empowerment of women, national and regional coordination, and confidence building among and between different national and societal groups. Specific attention will be given to how existing interventions could be better coordinated to maximize impact, as well as to suggestions of new or scaled-up short and longer-term interventions. It is also important to identify necessary analytical work and options to promote information sharing among countries of the Great Lakes. Bringing together government officials and civil society groups from neighboring countries to exchange information around technical issues can help build confidence, as well as develop professional expertise.

A brief background paper will be provided to facilitate discussion, along with a matrix indicating current and potential programs compiled from information provided by participants

Illustrative Agenda

9.00-9.30 *Opening session*

- Overview of meeting objectives and expected outcomes

9.30-11.00 *Session 1—Expanding regional infrastructure*

- Transport, energy and ITC linkages, and employment generation.
- Short-term and longer term interventions.
- Analytical work and information sharing.

11.00-12.30 *Session 2—Catalyzing economic development*

- Intra-regional trade, private sector development, agricultural growth, and employment generation.
- Short-term and longer term interventions.
- Analytical work and information sharing.

2.00-3.30 *Session 3—Promoting social welfare and cohesion*

- Health, education, and social protection, reintegration of former combatants, and special needs of women.
- Short-term and longer term interventions.
- Analytical work and information sharing.

3.30-5.00 *Session 4—Governance*

- Rebuilding key state institutions, management of natural resources, decentralization, and participation.
- Short-term and longer term interventions.
- Analytical work and information sharing.

+ *Session on Discussion of Security arrangements*

+ Example of success in other areas, e.g. under IGAD (in the regional context), Somalia and South Sudan

5.00-6.00 *Session 5—Next steps*

- Follow-up actions

Participants

(Level of participants should be at senior level eg. Head of Africa Department for bilateral partner countries, minister for African countries, Head of organization for RECs etc)

African organizations and multilateral partners

AUC, including NEPAD

AfDB

UNECA

ICGLR (International Conference on the Great lakes Region)

RECs—EAC, SADC, IGAD, COMESA (also CEPGL if it is functioning)

Technical organizations, eg. NELSAP (Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program)
World Bank, including IFC and MIGA
UN, UNDP, specialized agencies
EC

Bilateral partners

USA
UK
Germany
France
Sweden
Netherlands
Belgium
Japan
China

African countries

Angola

DRC
CAR
Republic of Congo
Rwanda
Burundi
South Africa
South Sudan
Tanzania
Uganda
Zambia
Kenya

Non-state actors

Private sector representatives
Women's organizations, eg. ICGLR Regional Women's Forum
National and regional non governmental organizations