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**QUADRIPARTITE MINISTERIAL LEVEL  
SUMMIT ON THE SITUATION IN THE  
EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

**LUANDA, ANGOLA,  
26 JUNE 2023**

**REMARKS BY DR. ALHAJI SARJOH BAH, DIRECTOR OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT,  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND SECURITY,**

- Excellency, Ambassador Antonio Tete, Honorable Minister of External Affairs of Angola, our amiable host,
- Excellency Chair of the PSC for the Month of June and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Ambassador Frederick Shava,
- Excellencies, Honorable Ministers representing RECs/RMs,
- CEOs of RECs/RMs and their Representatives,
- Special and High Representatives of the AU Chairperson to the DRC and Great Lakes Region,
- Representatives of the United Nations Secretary-General,
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by commending the Government and People of Angola for the hospitality and for hosting this important summit. It is indeed good to be in this magnificent city of Luanda—special appreciation to His Excellency Minister Antonio Tete for the warm welcome.

### **Excellencies,**

The situation in the eastern DRC remains of great concern to all, and that is why, against all odds, we have taken time off our busy schedules to participate in this summit. Despite the short notice, your participation in this meeting demonstrates your commitment and determination to support efforts to find a lasting solution to the security and humanitarian challenges in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Our deliberations should focus on finding a sustainable solution to the situation.

### **Excellencies,**

The proliferation of peace processes in the eastern DRC, initiated by several stakeholders, undoubtedly warrants a more coordinated, unified and coherent response. I commend all stakeholders for their positive initiatives towards peace and security in the eastern DRC. Suffice it to say that the imperative for coordination is more critical now than ever before! Let me, at this juncture, reiterate the urgency for us to harmonize all peace efforts to ensure coherence as we accompany the process for the restoration of “PEACE, SECURITY, STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT” in the eastern DRC.

Let me commend the work of the experts who, in the last two days, worked to develop a Consolidated Joint Master Plan for consideration by this Ministerial meeting. I have been informed that over the two days, the meeting of the experts focused on the following:

- (i) Identifying existing peace initiatives by different RECs/RMs; political, diplomatic and military tracks;
- (ii) Potential areas for enhanced collaboration between the countries concerned, the AU, RECs/RMs and the UN; and (iii) Concrete recommendations on the proposed way forward. I believe a representative of the Experts will expatiate upon the above when they present the outcome of their meetings.

Once our leaders adopt this Joint Master Plan, the Multi-stakeholder Coordination Working Group is expected to meet regularly, monitor and evaluate progress against the agreed timelines.

**Excellencies,  
Honorable Ministers,**

As we move ahead in today's meeting, allow me to underscore a few key messages:

- First, the AU reaffirms its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the DRC and calls on all parties to uphold the principles of good neighborliness.
- Second, effective coordination of RECs and Partners towards harmonization of the plethora of initiatives in the eastern DRC is imperative. In this regard, a clear division of labor, taking into account subsidiarity and complementarity and avoiding duplication of efforts, is non-negotiable.
- Third, the key coordination role of the AU cannot be overemphasized. As a Commission, we stand ready to work in sync with the RECs/RMs as we have done in the past.
- Fourth, the imperative for adequate, sustainable and predictable financing to support peace operations in the region is stronger now than ever. As you are aware, the AU is already supporting the EAC Regional Force with USD two million from the Peace Fund. A grant agreement in this regard between the AU and the EAC is expected to be signed tomorrow. We commend the Republics of Senegal and Angola for financially supporting the eastern DRC peace processes with euro one million each. This meeting may wish to call on more member-states and partners to support the peace processes in the region.
- Fifth, consolidating resources and operations of all forces deployed in the area is necessary, just as we need to consider the pertinent issue of command and control of troops with harmonized practices for greater efficiency.
- Sixth, given the impending end of the mandate of MONUSCO by December 2023, as a continent, we need to begin to think of the future in the event of an eventual exit of the Mission. As we focus on the military and political tracks in the eastern DRC, we must not lose sight of the importance of an effective stabilization program in the affected region while ensuring the protection of women and children. The Regional Stabilization Strategy (RSS), currently being implemented successfully in the Lake Chad region, is a worthy model. Lastly, on the humanitarian front, efforts should be geared towards enhanced support to provide humanitarian assistance to the needy population.

As I conclude, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let me remind us that civilians in the eastern DRC (particularly women, children and youth, the primary victims of this prolonged

crisis) are looking up to us to contribute towards lasting peace and stability in the region. I am confident that we can make this happen by leaving this meeting today with clear, practical and harmonized approaches for a sustainable resolution of the political and security challenges in the Eastern DRC.

Thank you for your attention!