



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Great Lakes Region

*FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 22 July 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. "Recalling its long standing engagement in the region, the European Union (EU) confirms its determination to continue to contribute to lasting stability and development in the Great Lakes Region (GLR). The latest crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has demonstrated the need for a reinvigorated comprehensive approach, addressing the local, national and regional roots of conflict, especially those of the Kivus. Renewed fighting in recent days around Goma and tensions between the DRC and Rwanda underscore the need for urgent action. The EU calls for an end to violence and the protection of civilians.
2. In this context, the EU strongly welcomes and supports the "Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region" signed in Addis on 24 February 2013 (the Framework Agreement), the appointment of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes, Mary Robinson, and the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2098 (2013). These measures and regional efforts constitute a window of opportunity that must be seized. The setting-up of both a national and a regional oversight mechanism should allow coordinated support and monitoring of the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Signatory Parties.
3. Strong ownership by governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders in the region is essential to the successful implementation of the Framework Agreement. In this context, the Technical Support Committee is key to reviewing the progress made in the implementation of these regional commitments.
4. The EU and its Member States will contribute actively to the success of these efforts through a coordinated response to the political, security and development process. In coordination with the UN and other partners, action to support the implementation of the Framework Agreement will focus on the following crucial five areas:

P R E S S

- promoting peace among the countries in the region, with respect for their sovereignty, through efforts to build cooperation and trust between them;
- encouraging the Government of the DRC to take responsibility and effectively implement all necessary reforms to ensure security and governance in eastern DRC as well as encouraging the neighbouring countries to cooperate, and to take active steps to rebuild trust among the local communities;
- supporting countries in the region to embed democracy and good governance, including the protection of human rights, through improving delivery of basic services, providing reliable physical, judicial and administrative security throughout the country and ensuring an open political space and effective and transparent election cycle;
- supporting countries in the region to rebuild the regional economy through transparent use of natural resources, a more integrated regional market and better access to global markets;
- promoting greater engagement by the international community in encouraging countries and other actors in the region to fulfil their undertakings and act responsibly both internally and towards their neighbours.

5. Stabilising eastern DRC means that countries of the region must respect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The reiteration in the Framework Agreement of the commitment by the Great Lakes countries not to interfere in the internal affairs of their neighbouring countries is a first essential step. There is an urgent need to put an end to all armed groups operating in the eastern DRC, in particular the M23, as requested by UNSCR 2076 (2012), and the FDLR (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda), equally listed by the sanctions committee established pursuant to UNSCR 1533 (2004). The EU will continue to support the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to UNSCR 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the Group of Experts. The EU welcomes the establishment, per UNSCR 2098 (2013), of an Intervention Brigade within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) with a mandate to, in strict compliance with international law, prevent the expansion of all armed groups, the neutralisation and disarmament of these groups in order to contribute to the objective of reducing the threat posed by armed groups on state authority and civilian security in eastern DRC and to make space for stabilisation activities. Sustainable political solutions to the complex crises are paramount and any military action must be embedded in an appropriate political process, both locally and between the DRC and its neighbours, as it is not to be considered as an alternative to a comprehensive solution. Beyond that, a comprehensive regional security concept should be proactively sought and encouraged. The 2006 "Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region" provides a legal framework and sets out an agenda for the ICGLR (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region) initiatives in this area. The EU will seek to play an active role in the follow up in the oversight mechanisms foreseen in the Framework Agreement.

6. The EU will continue to promote good neighbourliness and regional integration. Legitimate security concerns and other interests are better served by stable neighbours who are able to spread legitimate State authority throughout their territory. It is ready to contribute to constructive engagement and to support confidence-building measures, including the ICGLR Extended Joint Verification Mechanism. Contacts beyond the scope of central government (inter-parliamentarian debates, local cooperation between neighbouring municipalities or provinces) could complete the overall approach.

7. Stability in the region as a whole will be influenced by the internal evolution of each country. In the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, sustainable and durable development will be possible where there is accountable government, an open society respectful of fundamental rights of men and women and the rule of law. In its political dialogues with all countries of the region, the EU will promote values and measures to bring stability, accountability and the rule of law to the whole region. The EU will continue to assist the political development of all these countries through its support for democratic and accountable institutions including national independent bodies for the protection of human rights, and strengthening civil society, helping countries build the rule of law and parliamentary systems that will give the population effective ownership of, and trust in, elections and decision-making processes.
8. The EU welcomes the commitments taken by DRC in the framework of the national oversight committee to improve the effectiveness and accountability of governance, including Security Sector Reform (SSR), public finance management, decentralisation, reconciliation and democratisation, and the consolidation of State authority in the East. It calls on the Government of the DRC to effectively implement these reforms which will be key to the success of any stabilisation strategy. The EU stands ready to support the identification of clear benchmarks and feasible next steps for concrete action. The fight against corruption, deepening democratisation and the respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality will be essential components.
9. Security sector reform (SSR) in the DRC, in particular defence reform, remains of strategic importance. The EU welcomes the adoption of the legislative framework for the police and army. It calls on the DRC to take on the responsibility to build on the achievements of the EU missions EUPOL and EUSEC and to show political commitment to make concrete progress in reforming these institutions. The EU encourages MONUSCO to fully play its role in SSR, in line with the stronger SSR mandate it received in UNSCR 2053 (2012) and 2098 (2013), including through support to the establishment and implementation of a national SSR roadmap and the creation of a Congolese Rapid Reaction Force by the Government of the DRC. Support to the justice sector is essential to establish enduring rule of law. Military justice must also be improved so that crimes committed by the armed forces are effectively investigated and prosecuted. Building on the work by its missions EUSEC and EUPOL as well as lessons learned to provide guidance for a results-oriented approach, the EU and its Member States will remain engaged in support of the Government's implementation of SSR. The EU and its Member States are committed to an orderly transition of its CSDP missions, in particular as regards advice at the strategic level, training and human resources management in close coordination with the Government of the DRC and taking into account the planned activities of other international actors, in particular the UN. In line with SSR efforts, support could also be envisaged for a local community based approach to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes.
10. Deepening democracy and allowing open, responsible debate about future alternatives will support reconciliation efforts in all countries. So, too, will ensuring that human rights violations of all kinds, notably the recruitment of child soldiers and acts of sexual violence, are addressed and that there is no impunity anywhere in the region for such actions. The EU reiterates its commitment to fully implement UNSCR 1325 (2000) and to actively promote the equal participation of women in all elections, peace processes and decision-making processes. All armed groups and armed forces should be held accountable for human rights violations. SSR can serve as a vital means to structurally address human rights atrocities such as gender-based violence.

11. Preventing the outbreak of violence, saving lives and alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable affected people, in particular the hundreds of thousands IDP's and refugees, will remain a priority for the EU. The EU calls on all parties to enable safe and unhindered humanitarian access in accordance with international humanitarian principles. Continued humanitarian aid will aim at paving the way to a more sustainable approach that addresses the root causes and consequences of conflict that have led to a culture of impunity, serious human rights violations and gender-based violence. Special attention will be paid to provide support to the most fragile victims, particularly child soldiers and victims of sexual violence.
12. A truly lasting stabilisation of eastern DRC also involves addressing other local root causes of the conflict as well as the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The EU welcomes the recent meeting of the tripartite framework and calls for further proactive work by UNHCR on this issue. The EU also encourages the Government of the DRC to specifically pursue efforts to solve land issues, which are complex and often embedded in wider problems affecting the DRC national policies.
13. While reinforced security and a constructive political process are essential, a sustainable solution also requires effective development and improvement of the living conditions of the population affected by the crisis. Fighting poverty and the promotion of economic growth in eastern DRC will require a specific approach that will bring sustainable investment, value the resources of the region and ensure indispensable central but also local governance in order to promote concrete results.
14. Fighting poverty and inequality and promoting human, social and economic development, as well as gender equality in the region will require serious commitments both from donors and partner countries in order to meet the basic social needs of the population, promote economic growth and job opportunities in support of viable livelihoods and revenue for the State. The recent initiatives of the World Bank for the region are welcomed and the EU is ready to work together with committed development partners in identifying together initiatives where their efforts could complement. The EU will actively promote regional integration and interconnectivity building on its existing collaboration with the ECGLC (Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries) and the ICGLR. Better economic integration among neighbouring countries has to be matched by parallel improvement of links between eastern and western Congo.
15. Corruption and bad governance exacerbate poverty. In this context, a particular focus is needed on improving the governance of the extractive sector to allow the people to benefit from their mineral riches. In addition, illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources, including minerals, play a key role in sustaining conflict. A comprehensive approach to address this is needed; to this end, the EU will promote actively the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative and other initiatives such as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas and the ICGLR Regional Initiative on natural resources. The EU Transparency Initiative and a possible initiative on responsible sourcing of minerals originating from conflict-affected areas could be a base for a more comprehensive partnership between the EU and the countries in the region.

16. The international community as a whole has an important role to play in encouraging and supporting the region to build lasting peace, security and development through implementation of the Addis Framework Agreement. The EU and its Member States will work in close cooperation with regional organisations, including the African Union (AU), the ICGLR, the ECGLC, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and with the UN, including the reinforced MONUSCO.
17. The Council will revert to this issue after the meeting of the oversight mechanism to be held in the margins of the UN General Assembly and invites to this end the High Representative and the Commission to present concrete proposals for action for consideration by the Council. "
