



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

STATEMENT BY

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS CABINET SECRETARY

DURING THE

MINISTERIAL DEBATE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20TH 2021 (10:00AM)

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

1. May I begin as I should by thanking my colleague Ministers from Ireland and Angola who have kindly joined us at this important debate.
2. I also express my gratitude to Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Joao Caholo and Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Ms. Martha Pobee for their insightful briefings.
3. Excellencies, few parts of our world exemplify the notion of 'paradox' than Africa's Great Lakes region. Home to the second largest rainforest and a critical lung for our planet, the region is the catchment area for Africa's largest rivers and lakes and a habitat of impressive biodiversity. Importantly, for our discussion today, the Great Lakes region is endowed with a vast and unmatched array of precious and rare-minerals as well as a rich pool of oil reserves and other hydro-carbons. The potential of the region to be Africa's bread basket; its source of green and clean energy; its engine of industrialization; its pathway to economic growth and social transformation, seem patent and obvious yet the contrary is true.
4. A great disconnect exists between the region's riches and its promise and the reality of pervasive poverty, underdevelopment and instability that has plagued this area for centuries. This is due, in part, to an incessant cycle of brutal extraction, illicit exploitation, pillage and trafficking of the region's natural resources which has enabled the out-break, escalation and continuation of armed conflict. The scramble for the region's natural resources, has contributed to external interference in the region, fuelled inter-state rivalries, weakened

state institutions, spawned political instability and compromised the management of intra-state diversity at a great cost in terms of human suffering, particularly of women and children.

5. **Excellencies**, the capacity of some states in the region, especially those in the thralls of transition and reconstruction, to exercise full control over their territories, to manage resources, to provide basic public goods including security, law and order, to advance democracy and to tackle the proliferation of armed groups, is also severally stretched by the pressures posed by other threats such as natural calamities, climate change shocks, pandemics such as Ebola and Covid-19, and other humanitarian crises as well as the emergence of terrorist affiliated groups in the region. It is our judgement and belief that the strengthening of state capacity and agility coupled with the buttressing of regional institutions are essential tools for delivering on the promise that the Great Lake region holds for Africa and the world. This promise must include the safety and prosperity of women and protect them against gender-based violence particularly in Eastern DRC.
6. **Excellencies**, we are here today – to reinvigorate and renew the Council’s commitment to support the regional governments in seeking solutions to sustainably address the root causes and drivers of rampant conflict in the region with a special focus on positively harnessing the region’s natural resources for social and economic transformation.
7. It is important to applaud progress made. The region has remained resilient and determined to surmount its challenges and to march forward. The power of regional solutions cannot be over-emphasized. In this regard, the recent

high-level regional diplomatic interventions to improve and bolster bilateral relations in order to end the pervasive cycles of hardship and conflict are commendable.

8. We also applaud the work of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region under the leadership of Angola in its efforts to promote constructive dialogue and the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means and regional cooperation.
9. My delegation further welcomes the recent establishment of the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG) as a significant step in regional efforts to identify and implement non-military solutions to cross-border and conflict drivers. There is a need for sound African solutions to these uniquely African problems.
10. **In addition, Excellencies,** we register our full endorsement of continued efforts to implement the PSC Framework for the DRC and the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region.
11. My delegation also appreciates the support of the United Nations through the Peace Building Commission in fostering regional and socio-economic cooperation as a key component of building and sustaining peace and fostering sustainable development.
12. It is instructive that the sustainable development of natural resources is one of the priority areas in the three-year action plan to operationalize the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace and Consolidation, Conflict Prevention, and Conflict Resolution which the Special Envoy elaborated on.

13. We strongly believe that the region must proceed with courage and alacrity to harness its natural resources for the benefit of its people especially its youth so as to guarantee its peace and prosperity. There must be a shift away from the pattern of unregulated extraction and exploitation to a model that favours investment in people, capacity building, value addition, job creation and infrastructure development. Natural resources must be extracted and traded in a transparent, accountable and sustainable manner and utilized to drive positive change for our people.

14. Accordingly, we propose the following five action points:

- a. **One:** Assistance including capacity building ought to be provided to resource endowed countries in the Great Lakes Region to enable the development and implementation of appropriate policies, strategies and mechanisms for the management of the extraction of natural resources.
- b. **Two:** Enhanced support should be provided to national security and law enforcement agencies for improved security especially around the mining regions, transit routes and border points.
- c. **Three** it is critical to create platforms for inclusive dialogue in order to rebuild trust and confidence between mining communities, local authorities including security agencies, extraction entities and merchants in natural resources. There must be real investment in these communities including the creation jobs, skills and alternative livelihoods.

- d. **Four:** regional countries should cooperate to deploy in a coordinated manner a range of military and non-military options to comprehensively deal with the challenge of armed groups. The non-military measures may include, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes for the ex-combatants. Kenya is pleased to have provided her forces in the furtherance of peace in eastern DRC.
 - e. **Five** there is need to strengthen regional cooperation that deepens the economic integration of the affected countries with a special focus being accorded to the productive utilization of national resources. Regional cooperation is also critical for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement and other regional tools to fight illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources.
15. Let me conclude by reaffirming Kenya's commitment as a Great Lakes Region country in supporting the transformation of our region through the better management of our natural resources for our shared prosperity. Let us move forward with tenacity, let us move forward with courage and hope.

I thank you for your attention