

Statement by H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve,  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

**Great Lakes - Briefing and consultations**

New York, 3 October 2019

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## **BRIEFING**

Mr President,

First of all, we would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for his first briefing to the Security Council this morning. This briefing and the latest report of the Secretary General regarding the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework provide us with a clear view of the most recent developments in the Great Lakes region.

Mr President,

We would like to focus on three main messages today:

### **Firstly: economic development as a key factor**

- As the Special Envoy rightly underscored, development and economic cooperation are an important driver for peace and development in the Great Lakes region, as elsewhere, provided that it respects human rights and the environment. This is a priority that has been expressed

many times by the President of the DRC himself, and we fully support it.

- This also requires the creation of a level-playing field for investments and economic opportunities in the region. Activities and reforms undertaken to address corruption must be sustained, and transparency must be increased in the financial and mining sectors, for example, which would allow, among other things, for the encouragement of international financial institutions to re-engage.

**Secondly: Our most important message, as it underpins the success of everything else, concerns the security, political, humanitarian and human rights situations in the Great Lakes region.**

- We would like to welcome the new regional momentum, driven in large part by Presidents Tshisekedi and Lourenço. Clearly, the overall situation in the Great Lakes region remains a matter of concern and deserves our full attention. The latest regional initiatives have the potential to substantially tip the balance in the fight against the various armed groups.
- On the other hand, we hope that future presidential, legislative and local elections in Burundi will be credible, transparent and inclusive, and we hope that they will take place in a peaceful climate in which the rights and security of all political actors will be guaranteed.
- With regard to humanitarian matters, the latest report is particularly worrying. In the DRC, we remain concerned by inter-community violence in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu. At the same time, we must not forget that, in addition to the Ebola epidemic, which continues to

rage in the region, malaria and cholera continue to claim many lives.

- We are also paying close attention to the human rights situation in the DRC. As President Tshisekedi has said, respect for human rights and the restoration of the rule of law are crucial challenges. It is worrying to note that still far too many cases of sexual violence noted in the last report (as many as 41%!) are attributed to agents of the state. This only strengthens our conviction that professionalising the security forces and combating impunity must remain priorities. President Tshisekedi's proactive approach is creating a better environment for carrying out the reforms that have long been awaited by the Congolese people in this particularly important area. This proactive approach, along with several measures that have already been adopted, should be encouraged and supported by the international community so that the Congolese authorities continue their efforts with determination. MONUSCO's support, as mandated by this Council, has a role to play here and will remain crucial in this regard.

**Thirdly: my third message concerns strategic thinking on the Great Lakes region.**

- Before the end of this year, we will discuss the future of MONUSCO, while elections in Burundi are planned for next year. It is therefore crucial to have a UN approach for the Great Lakes region as soon as possible, a concerted approach that provides even more coherence, and that will be decidedly forward-looking.

Thank you for your attention.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

- Thanks to the ESSG.
- The report contains various descriptions related to the situation in Burundi. What are your thoughts and expectations on the human rights situation, as well as the upcoming elections?
- In our approach to the Great Lakes region, economic development and integration must remain crucial. For this to succeed, we must also help create a level-playing field for our investments, promote transparency in the mining and financial sectors and support the fight against corruption. Can we obtain more details on the Special Envoy's future activities in this regard?
- Belgium would be delighted to learn if and how the institutional structure and the operation of the Framework could be enhanced to increase efficiency of the organisational interaction with MONUSCO and the office of the Special Envoy for Burundi and to optimise implementation of the Framework.
- Finally, we would like to have more details on the internal strategic review covering the Great Lakes region. Would it be possible to envisage holding consultations or a briefing of the Security Council on this issue?

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