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A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

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I. Summary

Conflict in the Great Lakes region, centred on the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), has persisted over the past twenty years because of a failure to tackle the root causes of the problem.

Weak governance, absence of security and an inability to ensure the rule of law in a large part of the region, combined with poverty and lack of services and infrastructure, has deepened social divisions. Armed groups cause chaos, further exacerbating the region's problems by preventing human, social and economic development.

To remedy the situation action is needed in five crucial areas:

- a) to support states in the region to become more efficient, accountable and capable of delivering basic services and reliable physical, judicial and administrative security throughout the country, if desired through a devolved political structure;
- b) to ensure security in Eastern DRC and rebuild trust among the communities there;
- c) to rebuild the economy of the region to enable the people to benefit from their mineral riches, from the opportunities of a more integrated regional market, and from better access to global markets;
- d) to build cooperation and trust between the countries of the region and establish mechanisms to enable that cooperation to be effective;
- e) to ensure the international community's engagement in encouraging countries and other actors in the region to fulfil their undertakings and act responsibly both internally and towards their neighbours.

In pursuing these objectives, the EU will work in close cooperation with regional organisations, including the African Union (AU) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes region¹ (ICGLR), and with the UN, including the reinforced United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) which will continue to play an important role until domestic stability in the area is assured.

This strategic framework is designed to ensure that the EU's objectives of security and development, including conflict prevention and peace-building, are met in a mutually reinforcing and comprehensive way. It has no budgetary impact as such. Working with other members of the International Community, the EU will discuss the strategy with countries and organizations in the region, identify priorities, and prepare a timetable for the implementation of actions, including milestones to measure progress.

¹ The organization is composed of eleven member states, namely: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

II. Context

Although the definition of the ‘Great Lakes region’ may cover different geographical realities, for the purpose of this strategic framework, it refers to the territories of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the eastern provinces of the DRC (and, in a wider sense, western Tanzania and western Kenya, as well as parts of South Sudan). It is a potentially rich, fertile but unevenly populated and land-locked region, the countries of which are defined by colonial-era boundaries.

Since independence in the 1960s, all the countries have suffered from instability, periods of military rule and difficulties in getting sustainable development under way. The Rwanda genocide in 1994, Burundi’s civil wars and the collapse of the Mobutu regime in 1997 precipitated a decade of internal and regional conflicts which have killed millions and displaced or impoverished many of the survivors. Some of the countries in the region, particularly Uganda and Rwanda, have achieved good levels of economic growth in recent years and made satisfactory progress towards achieving their Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, whereas others have lagged behind. Nevertheless, the Great Lakes countries remain closely interconnected and the fate of each of them separately also affects the stability and development of the region. It makes sense, therefore, to consider the region as a whole.

The key factors affecting the situation are the following:

- large and growing population, unevenly distributed: from very high density in Rwanda and Burundi and some of the highlands of the Kivus to low density and large reserves of arable land in other parts of the DRC;
- political fragmentation and democratic deficits;
- exacerbated ethnic differences that are sometimes instrumentalised by competing parties. In the case of the DRC, the migration of Rwandophones into the Kivus has disrupted the political balance, while competition for resources and control persists between neighbouring countries and Kinshasa;
- weak States and poor administrative capacity, with some countries having their legitimacy contested and limited political and media freedoms;
- absence of the rule of law or effective security control, particularly in Eastern DRC, where the central State is not always trusted and where security forces have sometimes acted without any respect for civilian populations, even in some cases committing serious abuses embedded in a culture of impunity;
- illicit exploitation and trading of natural resources in Eastern DRC as a factor in triggering, sustaining and escalating violence, combined with poor management of the extractive industries sector and high levels of corruption;
- endemic poverty, low human development, unsatisfied basic needs, human rights violations, gender-based violence and inequality;
- difficult access to global markets and a lack of regional integration that hampers investment and the emergence of proper intra-regional economic interests.

Not all these factors have affected every country in the region to the same extent.. It is the situation in the DRC that has had the most far-reaching regional impact, given the sheer size of the country. Furthermore, all the countries, including Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, face specific challenges which have had, and may still have, a destabilising impact on regional security.

The Kivus in particular have become a battleground, not only between rival local groups representing specific interests but also between rebel groups originating from or supported by neighbouring countries seeking to control territories and exploit natural resources. This has led to an unstable and volatile situation.

As a result:

- the massive displacement of populations with consequent social and economic dislocation in the Kivus has led to a particularly desperate humanitarian situation.
- Human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, are still widespread.
- Economic and social development has stalled, particularly in Eastern DRC, where the state has failed to fulfil its basic functions of assuring security and administration.
- Basic community consensus has foundered; rivalries have been exacerbated, not reduced, and armed factions have multiplied.
- The prevailing situation in the Kivus has had a negative impact on the region as a whole because of a lack of trust between neighbouring countries, which have been accused of interference, yet again fuelling insecurity rather than creating stability.

Several attempts to find lasting solutions have not been effective or sustainable , as they have failed to address a number of fundamental issues, have not involved all the relevant stakeholders at local and national level, or simply have not been implemented.

The recent signing of the "Peace, Security and Development framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region" ("the Framework Agreement") and the appointment of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region provide a unique opportunity for defining a new comprehensive approach that could simultaneously address the local, national and regional roots of conflicts, especially those of the Kivus. In this regard, the "Framework Agreement" foresees the setting up of a national and a regional oversight mechanisms aiming at monitoring the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Signatory Parties². This occasion must not be missed and requires a rapid initiative in order to seize the window of opportunity that may be short-lived.

Ownership by governments and others in the region is key to a successful outcome. It should be supported by the international community as a whole. A concerted international approach will make an essential contribution to conflict resolution.

² On 24 February 2013, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The UN, the African Union, the 11-country International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the 14-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) act as guarantors.

III. Building blocks for a lasting solution

If a solution is to be found, a number of building blocks need to be put in place. They are all equally important and must be followed up concurrently in order to ensure real progress.

A. Tackling governance problems

Stability in the region as a whole will be influenced by the internal evolution of each country. In Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the DRC, sustainable and durable development will be possible where there is accountable government, an open society respectful of fundamental rights, and the rule of law. 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 are addressed and that there is no impunity anywhere in the region for such actions.

Effective and accountable governance, with special emphasis on public finance management, will also be key to the success of any stabilisation strategy in the region. In the DRC, for example, practical and assessable priorities must be set, bearing in mind its commitments in the "Framework Agreement", including Security Sector Reform (SSR), decentralisation, reconciliation and democratisation, and the consolidation of State authority in the East. The benchmarks which the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General will submit to both the parties in the region and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will be particularly relevant in this regard. The Busan New Deal achieved in 2011, which was endorsed by the DRC, remains an important reference for further action.

Within the framework of the UN-brokered initiative, the DRC has agreed to put in place a national oversight mechanism to supervise the implementation of the national commitments for reform. This is an important step. The international community, including the EU, the UN, International Financial Institutions as well as regional and international partners such as South Africa, Angola and China, must play an important supporting role in encouraging the DRC to take this path. Thus, close coordination between them is essential.

One critical constraint that has fuelled the conflict in the East has been the difficulty of reforming the security sector. Although some progress has been made with the police, efforts to professionalise the army and security forces have so far met with limited progress due to lack of political commitment, low levels of management capacity and lack of resources. However, there may now be a better environment for re-engagement: the need to undertake army reform is the first commitment set out in the "Framework Agreement" and MONUSCO has received a stronger SSR mandate and role in UNSC resolutions 2053 (2012) and 2098 (2013). The setting up of the international intervention brigade under the auspices of MONUSCO should also create more space for a reform of the Congolese army. Furthermore, some Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries involved in the brigade will be in a position to support the SSR process on the spot. The long-awaited yet indispensable legislative framework for the police and army is at last being put in place.

In this context the international community, including the EU through the EUSEC and EUPOL missions, has been following a pragmatic bottom-up approach, promoting initial steps towards reform in areas such as human resource management (census, chain of payment). Some EU Member States and other DRC partners have carried out the operational training of troops (battalion training). EUPOL has also supported the establishment of the "*Comité de Suivi de la Réforme de la Police*". SSR efforts must be accompanied by a new local community-based approach to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). Monitoring mechanisms, flexible support and inclusion of civil society should be part of a local DDR process.

Moreover, long-term stability cannot be achieved unless human rights violations, including gender-based violence, are addressed. In addition to indispensable national efforts, all the countries of the Great Lakes need to work together to promote human rights throughout the region and to put a stop to the impunity of crimes involving systematic abuses of human rights.

B. Ensuring sustainable security in eastern DRC

The eastern DRC in particular remains an area of open conflict, with security incidents throughout the Kivus and a growing number of other regions (including North Katanga and parts of the Orientale Province). Unless there is a minimum level of stability, the necessary reforms and policy implementation will be impossible. The establishment of an intervention brigade within MONUSCO with a robust mandate to combat armed groups and prevent external interference could be a significant game changer. However it is still crucial for military action to be embedded in an appropriate political process, locally and between the DRC and Rwanda, and for a differentiated approach to be followed for foreign-armed groups on the one hand and local-armed groups on the other. Dismantling the FDLR (*Forces démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*) will require specific action.

A more lasting stabilisation of eastern DRC involves addressing the local roots of the conflict, such as land issues and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the context of the DRC nationality laws and clarification regarding their implementation. Local and provincial elections must be part of the process but should be carefully prepared. Stabilising eastern DRC also means that neighbouring countries must abstain from external interference. The EU will continue to support the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the Group of Experts³.

Lessons can be learned from previous stabilisation and recovery plans initiated by the DRC government through the STAREC (Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern DRC), with the support of the international community through the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (ISSSS), particularly regarding the connections between security and post-conflict stabilisation work. Supporting local, inclusive stabilisation initiatives in a small number of critical districts of the Kivu might provide a testing ground for wider stabilisation.

³ "The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo was established on 12 March 2004 to oversee the relevant sanctions measures and to undertake the tasks set out by the Security Council [...] The Sanctions Committee is supported by a Group of Experts, appointed by the Secretary-General to monitor the implementation of the sanctions regime with particular focus on North and South Kivu and Ituri".

C. Fighting poverty and rebuilding the economy

Fighting poverty and promoting human, social and economic development in the region will require serious commitments both from the donors and the 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. In the right context, the Kivus could become a vibrant pole of development. This will require that security and development are mutually reinforcing, but also that regional integration prospects are based on a pragmatic and multifaceted approach.

Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have become members of the East African Community (EAC), which is developing its economic integration model relatively swiftly. They are already benefiting from this in terms of increased regional trade. They belong to other regional organisations too, but for more political reasons. The DRC is a member of several regional organisations that could be mobilised: ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States), SADC (Southern African Development Community), ICGLR and CEPGL (Communauté économique des Pays des Grands Lacs). In August 2012, together with South Sudan and Somalia, it officially applied to join the EAC. These multiple memberships reflect both the DRC's size and its central geographical position on the continent. However, as regards eastern DRC, Kinshasa's application to join the EAC merely reflects the fact that the Kivus, the Maniema and large parts of Orientale and Katanga are in fact already involved in East African economic gravitational dynamics.

Sustainable human development, regional integration and increased investment should be achieved through economic growth. Tackling food and nutrition security through investment in agriculture will be an important part of any solution in the region. The land is fertile and rich in minerals but economic growth including of agricultural production requires improved infrastructures and regional interconnectivity.. This would also have a positive impact on security and help reduce population pressure on the land by opening up new areas for settlement. Regional interconnectivity could be improved by building on existing collaboration within the CEPGL in the field of energy, including hydro-electricity. Better collaboration on customs and border management would also encourage cross-border trade and increase customs revenues for all countries.

Particular focus is needed on better regulation and accountability regarding the exploitation of and trade in mineral resources. Artisanal mining activities, which currently are unregulated, have generated some wealth, although few have benefited. In a way, this has fuelled conflict rather than stemmed it. Further to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, which aims at strengthening governance by improving transparency and accountability in the extractives sector, the certification mechanism of the ICGLR also offers a basis for improvement, although further investment is needed for developing governance instruments to implement it. Governments should be encouraged to improve the transparency of the extractive sector by building on the regional agreements and initiatives already in place. The recent discovery of oil in Uganda near the border with the DRC has great potential, provided its development is not impeded by inappropriate regulation or territorial disputes. Again, a forum is needed to enable cooperation on these issues.

D. Rebuilding trust between neighbours

It will be important to promote a positive vision of good neighbourliness and regional integration and to make neighbours understand that their legitimate security concerns and other interests are better served by stable neighbours who are able to spread legitimate State authority throughout their territory and by effective regional cooperation, rather than by allowing instability to continue. All parties should recognise the need to engage fully with their neighbours for the political and economic benefit of all.

In parallel with economic cooperation, therefore, confidence building is essential to restore a positive regional dynamic. Although the international community has an important role to play in promoting this, ultimately it is the responsibility of the countries in the region to find their way of living peacefully together. 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. Recognising each country's legitimate interest in neighbouring countries' domestic affairs is another. Borders in the region are porous. People on each side of a border are related. Thus, the fate of all four countries is inextricably bound up together. They must all demonstrate a willingness to contribute to constructive engagement and to take confidence-building measures (such as cross border cooperation and border monitoring).

International engagement can help in a number of ways. In the context of a strengthened MONUSCO, the Intervention Brigade and the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the ICGLR could make a difference in building trust among the countries of the region. The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region could also play a key role together with the regional oversight committee for the Framework Agreement. Beyond that, a global 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 initiatives in this area. In addition, the CEPGL has demonstrated that it can play a very useful role in the *rapprochement* between the DRC and Rwanda and remains a crucial factor for cooperation, in both economic and security terms. Other initiatives involving the AU and SADC as well as contacts beyond the scope of central government (inter-parliamentarian debates, local cooperation between neighbouring municipalities or provinces) could complete the overall approach.

Ensuring long-term stability will also require the consolidation of democratic, open and accountable political systems in each of the various countries concerned. All countries face challenges in achieving this: there is no one-size-fits-all system and each country must find its own solution. However, the challenges are particularly great in this region because of its history, because of the weakness of the democratic institutions in several countries, and because of the difficulty of finding the right balance between freedom of speech and political space and the risks of extremism or violence. The EU can assist the political development of all these countries through its support for democratic and accountable institutions, helping countries build the rule of law and parliamentary systems that will give the population effective ownership of (and therefore trust in) elections and decision-making processes.

E. Setting up a robust international support mechanism

The Great Lakes region hosts one of the largest and most costly peacekeeping operations in the world. Nevertheless the international community appeared to lose focus on the crisis after the 2009 peace agreement. The renewal of fighting in eastern DRC in 2012 reminded the world of the continuing volatility of the region.

The UN already plays a major role and the recent UN-brokered initiative provides a new momentum for addressing the crisis. However, it will be a challenge to coordinate the various levels of what will be a multi-faceted plan for the stabilisation of the DRC and the Great Lakes region. Where possible, it should build on coordination mechanisms which exist at local, national and regional levels, avoid any overlap with other existing initiatives and comply with the regional economic integration architecture in place.

It will be important to strike the right balance between regional ownership and international involvement, between maintaining pressure and achieving cooperation. The AU, SADC and the ICGLR all have important roles to play that need to be acknowledged.

A coordinated and comprehensive approach to the different issues is indispensable and includes: tackling the local, national and regional dimensions of the crisis; focusing on the Kivus without forgetting that many problems are common to the DRC as a whole; taking into account the challenges of democratisation in fragile countries in the region (Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda); and maintaining a balance between the commitments entered into by the DRC and the other countries of the region. Such an approach should set out a 'critical path' for sequencing interventions and should be enshrined in a contractual commitment with the governments of the region.

IV. The EU's role

The EU has a strategic interest in the stability of the Great Lakes region. It shares deep historical ties with each of the countries and a humanitarian concern for the suffering that repeated conflicts have brought to millions of the region's people. Conflict impedes the economic and social development which is necessary to alleviate the deep poverty. Moreover, conflict prevents the creation of open trading economies that can contribute to the growth of Africa as a whole and create stability that can spread to other fragile countries.

For all these reasons, over the last 20 years, the EU has invested heavily in fighting poverty, promoting social and economic development, the peace building and stabilization efforts while responding to the immediate needs of the people affected – through political, humanitarian, security and development work. It is crucial that the EU's commitment continues and that this effort is sustained. The experience gained from EU efforts to support the election processes in 2006 and 2011, to reform the security sector through EUSEC and EUPOL, and accelerate development through its external instruments, will be used to improve delivery of future action in each of these areas.

This requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond simply addressing the symptoms of the conflict in the eastern DRC. Naturally the EU's commitment must be

fully in line with the principles of the Agenda for Change and the priorities of the Governments of the region. It will also require a joint approach with EU Member States whilst engaging and coordinating with the wider international effort. The EU must be involved in the design of strategies and actions at an early stage.

Immediate needs will also require continued humanitarian aid in the region, in particular assistance to the hundreds of thousands IDPs and refugees as a result of 20 years of conflict. Whilst focusing on saving lives and alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable affected people, actions in this area will aim at paving the way to a more sustainable approach. Moreover, assistance will have to continue addressing the consequences of conflict and consequent disruption of the social fabric that have led to a culture of impunity, serious abuses of human rights and gender-based violence. The EU will continue to support efforts aimed at addressing the structural causes while at the same time providing immediate support to the victims.

Taking into account the building blocks identified above and the national and regional commitments made in the UN-brokered Framework Agreement, the following areas of intervention can be identified, bearing in mind that prioritisation, adequate sequencing and a suitable timeline must be considered.

A. Tackling governance problems, including SSR, human rights and rule of law

Policy proposals:

- Support for democratic governance and structures in all countries of the region will remain an important element of EU policies. The EU external instruments can provide decisive support in this essential area of the Cotonou Agreement. Following up EU electoral observation missions and UN periodical reviews will contribute to this.
- The EU should actively contribute to the work of the DRC national oversight committee that will be set up to ensure the effective implementation of the commitments made by the DRC. All areas (SSR, consolidation of state authority, decentralisation, democratisation/elections, economic development and structural reforms (including financial, reconciliation processes, return of refugees etc.) require a clear set of priorities and a critical path. The EU can contribute at a political level but also through practical measures within its cooperation instruments. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Government's 2012-2016 Programme provide a basis for the necessary reforms and the overall framework for future cooperation.
- Security sector reform will require clear commitments from the government and strong coordination among all DRC partners with a view to a coherent platform of intervention, without prejudice to bilateral cooperation. It is important to have a shared sense of what is realistically achievable in the short term and to reach out to other partners such as South Africa, Angola and China to ensure that this vision is shared as widely as possible. The EU is also currently assessing its future role in the SSR process in the context of the phasing out of the EUSEC/EUPOL missions⁴ and

⁴ The EUPOL RD Congo mission supports the efforts of national Congolese authorities to reform the national police. The mission aims also to help improve the interaction between the police and the criminal justice system, thus contributing to the fight against the impunity of sexual violence and human rights abuses. EUPOL RD Congo was launched in July 2007 and its mandate has been recently extended until

the mobilisation of other EU instruments, as well as a phasing out or handing-over of activities to the DRC or others DRC partners. As regards army and police reforms, advice at strategic level, the set-up of adequate nationally owned training systems, as well as the establishment of better human resources management form a coherent set of measures, which could be partly supported in the future. In line with SSR efforts in the DRC, support could also be envisaged for a local community-based approach to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR).

- A stable macro-economic framework will require continued commitment on the part of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as well as support for improved Public Finance Management with a view to increasing the national budget.
- Effort should focus on deepening democratisation and widening political space at all levels (national, provincial, local); citizenship issues; the return of refugees; support for elections (in line with general support for the DRC democratisation process), and providing effective basic administration, including through decentralisation.
- On the basis of the existing Human Rights Country Strategies for the countries of the region, the EU should concentrate on fighting impunity and facilitating access to a modern, transparent, equitable and accessible justice system, in particular in the following four areas: situation of human rights defenders; gender-based violence; children in armed conflicts; and freedoms of expression, association and the rights of the opposition.

B. To ensure sustainable security

Policy proposals:

- Support to MONUSCO's future role (intervention brigade) and to a credible Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism.
- The on-going review of STAREC/ISSSS should help to create a framework for future stabilisation support. Two stages can be anticipated: more immediate post-humanitarian support aimed at creating the basic conditions for social and economic recovery (basic *ad hoc* intervention in parallel with humanitarian aid) and a second phase aimed at putting in place the resources and governance conditions for sustained rehabilitation and development..
- The setting up of effective administration and service delivery in post-conflict areas, including through a decentralisation process in close consultation with local authorities and stakeholders.
- Support for local, inclusive stabilisation initiatives in a small number of critical districts of the Kivu provinces to provide a testing ground for wider stabilisation. Such initiatives could also foster the establishment of dialogues between communities.

September 2013. The EUSEC RD Congo provides advice and assistance on defence reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with the aim of assisting the Congolese authorities in setting up a defence apparatus capable of guaranteeing the security of the Congolese people, while respecting democratic standards, human rights and the rule of law, as well as the principles of good governance and transparency. The mission was launched on 8 June 2005 and in September 2012 its mandate has been extended until 30 September 2013. Based on PSC political agreement, it will be followed by a twelve month final transition phase with the aim of phasing out or handing over its tasks.

- Fostering SSR is another part of the initiatives for security in the east of the DRC. In addition to contributing to short or medium term objectives for the reform of the Congolese army (FARDC), specific support for the police could be examined to ensure the transition from military rule in post-conflict areas.

C. Fighting poverty and rebuilding the economy

Policy proposals:

- Promote accelerated human and social development using available instruments including development cooperation at both national and regional levels.
- Support regional or sub regional initiatives in particular those ones reinforcing the economic links and mutual interests of the countries. On an immediate basis, maintain support to CEPGL and capitalize on the opportunities to support the regional initiative for development of the energy in the Great Lakes region.
- Infrastructures: promoting regional interconnectivity.
- Continuing support for the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and other transparency/accountability initiatives regarding mineral/natural resources.
- Support to the ICGLR Regional Initiative on Natural Resources (certification mechanism) and for the dissemination, adoption and use of the *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas* in the Great Lakes region will be provided. The opportunity to launch a more ambitious programme to build upon these pilot initiatives is being assessed.
- In March 2013 the EU launched a public consultation on a possible EU initiative on responsible sourcing of minerals originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas with the aim of promoting supply chains transparency and to assist resource-rich countries.
- Improve the sustainable management of natural resources to help reduce the risk of future conflict and provide a strong platform for economic development.
- Mechanisms to boost legal trade, including border and customs management should also be promoted, as should regional cooperation to preserve trans-border environmental bio-diversity.

D. Rebuilding trust between neighbours

Policy Proposals:

- Support for the regional commitments of the Framework Agreement.
- The EU should seek to be involved in and actively support the DRC oversight mechanisms set out in the Framework Agreement and ensure proper follow up.
- Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the Group of Experts and the ICGLR Enlarged Joint Verification Mechanism.
- Support for democratisation processes, particularly in the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, taking account of the electoral calendars in the various countries of the region.
- Promote regional security in forums like the CEPGL, the ICGLR and the AU, as part of a broader political partnership.

- Support for DDRRR (Demobilisation, Disarmament, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration) policies related to the FDLR and other negative forces originating from the DRC's neighbours.
- Support for a judicial strategy on the Great lakes based on judicial cooperation between countries in the region and continued cooperation with the International Criminal Court. While the EU is already involved in developing the justice sector in the country and in eastern DRC, the establishment of mixed courts in the DRC by the international community could complement these efforts, where necessary.

E. Setting up a robust international support mechanism

Policy proposals:

- Support the UNSG Special Envoy and the framework agreement commitments. The political oversight committees need to rely on operational mechanisms.
- Need to ensure that the implementation of the DRC and regional commitments set out in the framework agreement progress in a coordinated manner
- Promote mutual accountability between Great Lakes countries and donors
- Whenever possible, build on existing national/regional development plans.

V. Conclusion

The latest crisis offers not only an opportunity for reengagement but an imperative to establish the foundation for lasting peace and development in the Great Lakes region. The UN-brokered Strategic Framework offers a renewed political and regional consensus for a durable stabilisation. The EU can and should play an active part in supporting these efforts.

11 June 2013