

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS
Republic of South Africa

MEDIA ADVISORY

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We would like to commend the outgoing Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes, Mrs Mary Robinson for her tireless effort at ensuring the successful implementation of the PSC Framework and her passion for the resolution of challenges facing women and children in conflict areas, as evidenced by her initiative that led to the convening of the Great Lakes Women's Dialogue. We pledge our support to the incoming Special Envoy Mr. Said Djinnit. We are confident that Mr Djinnit will bring into his new responsibility his vast experience from the erstwhile Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its successor the African Union (AU). We are looking forward to a collaborative interface with Mr Djinnit and wish him all the best in his new appointment.

As we deliberate on the developments pertaining to the security situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and neighbouring states I am reminded of the observation made by the Secretary General in his report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the region, presented to the Security Council on 5 Mar 2014, when he said "When the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was signed on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, the peace and security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo was fragile. Tension among the countries in the region was, once again, on the rise. A year after signing the Framework, the situation on the ground, though relatively delicate, has improved considerably, owing to a number of concerted national, regional and international efforts. On the military front, following the end of the M23 rebellion and the formal conclusion of the Kampala Dialogue, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now able to regain control of territories previously held by M23 and has commenced new operations against foreign armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and the Forces Nationales de Libération. The defeat of M23 has also led to the spontaneous surrender of elements from

other armed groups, which now need to be sustained by effective demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes, at the national and regional levels.”

South Africa wishes to reiterate its commitment to finding solutions and/or supporting efforts aimed at bringing about lasting solutions to conflict in the continent and to establish a peaceful environment in which all Africans live in harmony. We believe that the security challenges facing the Great Lakes region and the Democratic Republic of Congo in particular, require the collaboration of all affected parties supported by the international multilateral and multinational organisations in seeking to find a lasting solution.

We urge continued close cooperation between MONUSCO and the neighbouring states of Rwanda and Uganda to ensure the successful Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation of rebels from these countries some of whom have chosen to voluntarily surrender. We strongly believe that such can give impetus and serve as an incentive for all other armed groups to follow suite.

Referring to the progress made in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in the DRC and the region, the Secretary General in the report mentioned above also noted that “Although these important steps have contributed to creating a foundation for peace and security, it is nonetheless important to emphasize the enormous amount of work that still lies ahead to achieve the overall objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and address the root causes of conflict in the Great Lakes region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region still face a number of peace and security challenges which, if not properly addressed, could negatively affect the progress achieved thus far.”

We therefore call upon all stakeholders to work collectively and tirelessly towards ensuring successful disarmament of the implementation of the PSC Framework. We have come this far, we cannot afford to turn our back nor can we afford to be complacent until the people of Eastern DRC fully enjoy their right to a stable and safe environment. South Africa forever stands ready to provide support to efforts aimed at realising successful implementation of the PSC Framework.

South Africa has continuously recognized that the employment of military force is not an end in itself but a means towards an end. We therefore consider it

crucial that peaceful means of resolving conflict be given a chance whenever opportunities for such present themselves. We are encouraged by the display from some elements of the FDLR, of an intent to disarm and demobilise; and follow the path of peace. We call upon all parties to assist in ensuring that the disarmament of the FDLR is given a chance to succeed and that it is handled in a manner that serves to inspire other armed groups to follow suite. We further call upon all armed groups in the Eastern DRC to follow the example set by these elements of the FDLR.

For the successful execution of the Force Intervention Brigade's primary responsibility (which is to disarm and demobilise the armed groups thereby neutralising them) we also urge the Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO, Mr Martin Kobler to ensure that all means possible are made to enable the FIB to avoid *mission creep* and remain with undivided attention when executing its primary responsibility. In this regard we wish to urge that the use of the FIB to, inter alia, secure the demobilisation centres, be avoided as this may weaken its operational capability especially in instances where offensive military action may be necessary to induce forced disarmament and demobilisation. Such tasking would be more acceptable at a later stage when most of the armed groups have been disarmed and demobilised.

I thank you

ENDS.

Issued by: **Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans**

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