



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Great Lakes Region

*2971st EXTERNAL RELATIONS Council meeting
Luxembourg, 27 October 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- “1. The Council welcomes progress made in the African Great Lakes Region by significantly improved bilateral diplomatic relations between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. It underlines the importance of a consolidation of peace and stability in Eastern DRC and calls again upon the DRC and Rwanda to fully implement the Nairobi and Goma peace agreements as well as the Ihusi agreement of 23 March 2009.
2. The Council remains deeply concerned by the severe humanitarian situation in Eastern DRC, caused by attacks and atrocities carried out by the FDLR and the LRA, but in many cases also by the Congolese army, FARDC, against the local population during Kimia II and Rudia II operations. The Council condemns in particular the ongoing recruitment of child soldiers and the wide spread sexual violence. It urges all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and human rights, including the protection of civilians. The Council reiterates its support for MONUC.
3. The Council calls on the Government of the DRC to ensure without exception that those responsible for violations of international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law, are held accountable. Timely vetting of FARDC commanders and soldiers is of crucial importance in this respect. The Council reiterates its full support for the International Criminal Court activities in the region and calls on the Government of the DRC to cooperate with the Court, particularly with regard to the arrest and surrender of Bosco Ntanganda to the ICC.

P R E S S

4. The Council welcomes President Kabila's 'zero tolerance campaign' against sexual violence, as an important step to address the issue of impunity. The EU is prepared to support the Congolese authorities and other international organizations in a comprehensive approach to fight sexual and gender based violence.
5. The Council is strongly committed to the full implementation of UNSCR 1804 and 1857, and has accordingly adopted restrictive measures on the DRC against FDLR, their leaders in Europe and other armed groups. Furthermore, other concrete measures are being considered within the EU inter alia to tackle FDLR.
6. The Council is concerned by the continuing involvement of the FDLR and other armed groups, but in many cases also by the FARDC, in the illegal trade of minerals and other natural resources in Eastern DRC. It encourages the Task Force on illegal exploitation of natural resources to make concrete proposals for action by the international community. The Council stresses the need for increased cooperation between national and local authorities to tackle cross border criminal activities.
7. The Council states that security sector reform will remain a key priority for the EU in the DRC, including through the work carried out by the two EU security sector reform missions in the DRC and by the European Commission. The Council underlines the importance of coordination and collaboration with MONUC, other relevant actors and a firm ownership by the Congolese Government in this regard. The Council stresses the importance of disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement and welcomes the progress made so far as part of the comprehensive effort against armed groups, including the FDLR.
8. The Council urges the Congolese authorities to fulfill their commitment to organise and ensure financing for the planned local elections. The EU stands ready to continue supporting the electoral process. Governance problems, lack of transparency and violations of civil and political rights constitute serious obstacles to the democratization process and have to be addressed by Congolese authorities.
9. The Council calls on the LRA to honour its commitment to sign the final peace agreement. It insists on the necessity of a comprehensive approach for a solution to LRA related problems, including the protection of civilians, in close cooperation with UN peacekeeping missions in the region and other international partners. The Council underlines the importance of the Government of Uganda implementing all applicable provisions of the Juba Peace Agreements.
10. The Council expresses its concern over September's riots in Kampala and urges the Ugandan Government to resolve any political disputes through peaceful dialogue and democratic institutions. The Council also urges the Government to do its utmost to assure that there will be a level playing field in the run up to the general elections of 2011 and that these elections will be free, fair and transparent.

11. The Council welcomes significant progress in the Burundian peace process and the creation of the Partnership for Peace in Burundi. The Council urges the Burundian Government to do its utmost to organise general elections in 2010 that are free, fair and transparent, and guarantee the independence of the National Electoral Commission (CENI) and the necessary space for political parties. The EU will continue to play a key role in the Political Directorate.
 12. The Council recognises the role played by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries for contributing to peace and bringing about socio-economic development in the region.
 13. The Council will continue to follow closely the developments in the Great Lakes region and calls upon all actors to adhere to the ongoing peace processes.”
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