

**Security Council open debate on**

**Maintenance of International Peace and Security:  
Prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region**

**Statement by**

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**New York, Monday, 21 March 2016**

***[Check against delivery]***

Mr President,

Thank you for organising today's Debate, which addresses important issues which deserve our attention and consideration. I would like to align myself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to focus on two issues which are highlighted in the Concept Note for this Debate. The first is **the role that elections play in contributing to durable peace, reconciliation and development**. The holding of regular, inclusive and transparent elections is vital for credible democratic governance. Crucial to the success of any electoral process is the political environment in which elections take place and creating a conducive environment involves working closely with a wide range of stakeholders.

Unfortunately the environment in which last July's Presidential elections took place in **Burundi** could not be judged as conducive to inclusive and credible elections. The situation in the country is now characterised by pervasive violence, human rights abuses and forced displacement. We would urge the Government of Burundi, in the interest of its people, to move forward urgently on an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue, which is essential to restoring peace and stability.

We are also following closely the situation in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, particularly in light of the upcoming set of elections in the country. We have taken note of the comments made by the African Union and the United Nations, stressing the importance of peaceful, transparent and timely elections, which would serve to consolidate much of the progress made

in the DRC over the last decade. In this pre-electoral period, it is especially important that the rule of law and human rights are respected and that arrangements respect Constitutional provisions.

More broadly, we recall that the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance provides clear standards for governance. We urge all governments in the Great Lakes region, as elsewhere in Africa, to adhere to those standards in order to build truly inclusive and resilient democracies, the foundation for durable economic and social development.

The second issue I would like to address is **the critical role for women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and governance**. As noted in the three high level reviews in 2015, and at the Security Council debate last October, the participation of women is key to sustainable peace. Women must participate in, and have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in, all areas of peace and security - as mediators and interlocutors, as peace-builders and as active participants in economic, social and political spheres. From our own experience of conflict on the island of Ireland, we know first-hand the importance of the promotion and empowerment of women as peace-builders in constructing a pathway to sustainable peace.

In addition, the Great Lakes region has many examples of the particular impact of conflict on women and girls, including the devastating impact of sexual violence. We remain deeply concerned by grave reports, in both scale and nature, of acts of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as other human rights violations, in the DRC, in particular in the east of the country. We are also concerned by reports of sexual violence perpetrated by the security forces

during house searches in Burundi. Such violations are completely unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. We encourage the authorities in the DRC to further build on progress to combat sexual violence and to continue to work to ensure full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 and 2122.

Mr President,

Ireland strongly supports the work of UN Special Envoy Saïd Djinnit, and his predecessor Mary Robinson. In particular, we welcome his commitment to promote a participatory approach to the formulation of gender-related policies. We believe that engaging with a broad range of actors in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region has the best chance of success, and that engaging with civil society will help address all issues surrounding sexual and gender based violence.

Thank you Mr President.