



REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA
Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

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Debate abierto

Mantenimiento de la Paz y Seguridad:
Prevención y Resolución de los Conflictos en la Región de los
Grandes Lagos

Favor cotejar con el orador

Nueva York, 21 de marzo de 2016

Mr. President,

1. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela appreciates the initiative of the Republic of Angola to convene this timely and important debate on Prevention and Resolution of Conflict in the African region of the Great Lakes. We would like to welcome the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Angola, Mr. Georges Pinto Chicoti.
2. Likewise, we would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and the World Bank's Country Manager for the African Region.
3. Venezuela associates itself to the declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.
4. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to stress the important role of Angola, in its capacity as President of the Great Lakes Conference since 2004, and believes that the agreed efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the Southern African Development Community represent a priority to speed the development and consolidate regional peace.
5. To this day, the countries in the region face serious threats against their stability and economic development, given a great variety of conflicts in which exclusion, plundering of natural resources, and poverty play an important role; therefore affecting the consolidation of State institutions, putting at risk the progress obtained in the recent years.
6. The void created by such weakness is used for the benefit of different criminal groups to illegally exploit and trade mineral resources and wildlife, as its been reflected in the Secretary-General's report on the Strategic Framework for the Great Lakes Region, which indicates that 50%of the illegal flow comes from illicit trade of gold. If this kind of extraction was done legally, under guidance of the

States of the region, the revenues obtain would substantially benefit the social and economic development of these nations.

7. In this context, it is important to mention that since 1990 until today, there have been at least eighteen armed conflicts funded directly from the illegal extraction and trading of natural resources. Therefore, the most “appropriate” natural resources for funding of conflicts are those that can be easily extracted, hidden, and sold. In many cases, armed groups do not need to carry out the extraction directly, but they receive the funds from the illegal taxation of trade and transit in exporting routes”.
8. The institutional weakness of the States, whose sovereign right over natural resources is limited, calls for the international community to strengthen the measures to fight and eliminate the extraction and trade of minerals -gold, coltan, diamonds- by armed groups, which in the end finance their criminal activities with the resources obtained from these operations. In this context, it is important to support the strengthening of the institutional capabilities of countries affected for such dynamics, so these can fully and sovereignly handle their natural resources, in compliance with resolution 1803 (XVII) of the General Assembly, adopted in 1962.
9. The complexity of the issues affecting GLR Countries require the implementation of a genuine and supportive cooperation that takes into consideration the particular realities of those countries to allow for the creation of favorable social and economic conditions for the eradication of poverty and exclusion.
10. We would like to underscore the efforts of the Central African States and regional organisms for the consolidation of peace and democracy. In this regard, we welcome the elections held in the region in the past couple of months. We encourage the international community to accompany and respect the sovereign decision of citizens in the selection of their authorities, by avoiding the usual practice of interference in the internal affairs of the countries. Moreover, we advocate for national stability and reconciliation to overcome any political or

security difficulty that may rise, and to solve their differences in the framework of political negotiations.

11. Venezuela is aware that addressing conflict situations represents a challenge for the Governments in the region, as well as for regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations. Extreme actions and violence constitute one of the main challenges for peace. Consequently, we strongly condemn all violations of human rights and international humanitarian rights, caused by armed confrontation, while we reiterate the importance of the accountability process in order to put an end to the prevailing cycles of impunity.
12. On the other hand, we support the fight and combat against the illicit traffic of small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of weapons is a destabilization factor in the region, thus we believe that the international community must double its efforts to prohibit the transference of weapons to non-State actors.
13. It is important to directly support countries that have recently overcome a conflict, so these do not return to the path of confrontation, by providing them with internal capabilities for the handling of their natural resources and economies, including the strengthening of their institutions. To this end, the cooperation of international donors, financial institutions, and bilateral associates is essential in order to promote projects for the development of the Great Lakes region, as well as reducing the vulnerability of the population and revive the economic activity.
14. We believe that the United Nations system must carry on promoting economic development in the Great Lakes region, which should be handled in an integral way. We insist that the solution to conflicts must take into account economic and social aspects that have historically affected those States. The political process must be addressed in a multidimensional way, based on the pillars of policies for development, protection of human rights, and eradication of poverty which will lead to common benefits.
15. Finally, we reiterate our solidarity and support to the efforts of the African countries for peace and social and economic development of the peoples. The priorities listed in the roadmap of the Regional Strategic Framework for the Great

Lakes countries must be shared and supported by all the international community.