

To our esteemed readers:



A warm welcome to this edition of our newsletter! As in the rest of the world this year, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has tested the resilience of Africa's Great Lakes region. Throughout these challenging times, we have spared no efforts to work with the countries of the Great Lakes and regional organizations to maintain progress towards sustainable peace and development. This newsletter offers several examples of this collective endeavor.

Never in recent memory has humanity faced a challenge of this magnitude for its own survival. This existential threat has spared no communities, no countries, no regions, and no continents. The coronavirus has infected people in 188 countries worldwide. As of today, the number of deaths to the virus globally is fast approaching the two million mark. This is a world tragedy whose consequences will be with us for a long time to come. We are grateful that the Great Lakes region of Africa has been spared from more devastating effects. But we mourn with the rest of the world the many lives of loved ones taken from us prematurely. World economies have been brought to a halt resulting in millions of job losses. In many countries, health services proved inadequate or insufficient in the face of the scale of the disease. Schools, universities, and other academic centers were forced to close. In short, there are hardly any sectors or areas that have not been touched by the Coronavirus.

2020 also marked the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. I particularly welcome this celebration at a time when a new United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region is launched at the request of the Secretary-General. There is no doubt that we all need to do more to deliver a safer and more prosperous future to the people of the Great Lakes region. To this end, the strategy developed in consultation with regional stakeholders, will maximize the engagement and impact of the United Nations in the region.

I am also pleased that the year 2020 marked an important milestone for the promotion and defense of the rights of women and young girls with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of

Resolution 1325 (2000), the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 75th anniversary of the United Nations in a context where no one should be left behind.

I am encouraged by the progress towards greater regional cooperation and the promotion of peaceful relations of the past year. This is a challenging, yet promising time for the Great Lakes region.

As Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, working in close collaboration with other UN entities and regional stakeholders, I will spare no efforts to ensure that peace, stability, and prosperity remain at the core of the political priorities of the region, and are translated into concrete gains for the millions of men, women, and young people who look forward to a better future.

I wish you a joyous holiday season and a peaceful and prosperous year in 2021.

Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region