

UN Special Envoy Said Djinnit and Civil Society actors from the region dialogue on the achievements, challenges and opportunities for lasting peace in the Great Lakes Region

Addis Ababa, 27 January 2016 – For the fourth year in a row, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region met with civil society actors during a consultative dialogue organized by OXFAM International on the margins of the AU Summit. The yearly meetings focus on how the UN Special Envoy and civil society in the Great Lakes Region can support each other to ensure the full implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region.

Civil society representatives met together in the morning to discuss what needs to be done, and by whom, to support the PSC Framework, signed 3 years ago by the Heads of State of the region. They highlighted achievements and new threats to the Framework, particularly the crisis of Burundi. They shared information on what they have been doing to support the implementation of the PSC Framework and committed to more meaningful engagement on critical issues such as the need for strengthening CSO and women’s participation in political and peace processes.

Special Envoy Djinnit told the participants how much he values this genuine conversation and commended civil society for their strong support of the PSC Framework and his mandate. He noted significant challenges in the region, particularly with the neutralization of all armed groups as well as the crisis underway in Burundi and tensions around upcoming elections in a number of countries. “Nevertheless”, he said, “The PSC Framework remains one of the most powerful tools we have to address the challenges that have faced eastern DRC and the region for over 20 years.”

Special Envoy Djinnit highlighted some of the initiatives his office has undertaken with key stakeholders and partners to move forward to achieve peace, security, cooperation and development throughout the Great Lakes. He informed of the upcoming Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes that will take place in Kinshasa on 24 – 25 February. It aims to be a catalyst for investment, development and long-term prosperity that can benefit all. He drew attention to the accomplishments of the Women’s Platform for the PSC Framework, which is having real impact for grassroots women’s organizations and their communities.

The Special Envoy acknowledged the important role of civil society. At the same time, he recognized the need to increase effective participation of civil society, particularly women and youth, in peace processes either currently underway or in the future, and offered his full support. He told the participants that he counted on them to offer concrete advice on how together, real progress can be made to ensure the PSC Framework delivers on its promise of hope

OXFAM South Africa Executive Director, Siphon Mthathi, thanked the Special Envoy for accepting the invitation to the dialogue with CSOs, which she said was an effort to bring voices from the grassroots together with the Special Envoy so that concerns can be aired on both sides and work together to find solutions. She raised concern on the Burundi crisis and said Oxfam was concerned about the humanitarian impact that the crisis was adding to an already existing dire situation in the region. She appealed to the Special Envoy to urge African Union member states to ensure that the PSC Framework is fully implemented and Burundi resolved. *“We have heard the calls of women and youth caught in the conflict for meaningful and inclusive dialogue, which goes beyond consultation but includes them in the implementation of the peace deals. Our brothers and sisters in the great lakes region are asking what*

happened to the 'Framework of Hope. To them Commitments in PSCF were supposed to bring a robust response to all these conflict issues and bring development."