



Private Sector Investment Conference in the Great Lakes of Africa

PRESS RELEASE

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The leaders of Africa's Great Lakes Region and Private Sector Stakeholders Agree to Boost Investment

Kinshasa, 25 February 2016 – The Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted a two day inaugural Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. The Conference was co-organized by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region and the International Conference on the Great Lakes on 24-25 February 2016.

The regional investment conference, which was the first in the Great Lakes region of Africa brought together over 500 participants from the region and the world. The opening ceremony, presided by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), H.E. Joseph Kabila Kabange, was attended the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon; the Vice Presidents of Angola and Burundi; the Prime Minister of Rwanda; Ministers and Ambassadors from the region; representatives of international organizations; the diplomatic corps; and investors as well as business leaders.

The main objective of the Conference was to provide a platform for public -private dialogue on promoting responsible investment in the region and enhanced networking opportunities between regional and international stakeholders. Participants reviewed current and emerging challenges to private sector investment in the region and identified priorities actionable policy recommendations for the Leaders of the region.

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Discussions covered several sectors including Agriculture, Infrastructure, Mining, Energy, Information and Communication Technology, Tourism, and Finance.

Twenty-five illustrative regional investment opportunities were presented to the participants in an attempt to generate business interest, and to encourage participants to take advantage of the region's rich endowments.

President Kabila welcomed the opportunity to host this event which, in his view will have a positive impact not only on the DRC, but also on the entire region. He expressed hope that the outcome of the meeting will be followed by real investment transactions. "From now on, we shall no longer refer to the Great Lakes as a region marred with instability and conflicts, but one where it is good to invest. I hope that the conclusions of this conference will trigger real interactions between the private sector and political decision makers both at national, regional and international levels. In doing so, we will ensure continued economic growth in the region materialized by job creation, and thus we will definitely turn the page of violence and insecurity that the region has been known for," President Kabila said.

At the opening ceremony, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recalled the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement the DRC and the region signed in Addis Ababa in 2013 and the decision to organize the Private Sector Investment Conference.

"Because leaders recognized that peace and development are two sides of the same coin. They understood that the lack of jobs and opportunities creates a breeding ground for conflict. So we have joined together today to share ideas and experiences underscoring the importance of attracting private investment, promoting business activity and enhancing regional economic cooperation and integration," the Secretary-General said. "The people of the Great Lakes region count on you to fully contribute to the goal of transforming the region. They look to you to strengthen productive capacity;

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create decent jobs and livelihoods; improve economic governance; and foster inclusive development and shared prosperity. This is a win-win approach for the well-being of society and a company's bottom-line. It is the pathway to peace and stability," he added.

The opening ceremony was followed by a high-level panel involving the Prime Ministers of the DRC and Rwanda, the Vice-Presidents of Burundi and Angola on what their respective countries were doing to improve the investment climate in the region. Thematic sessions were organized along the seven priority sectors identified. These sessions provided a unique opportunity for dialogue among political leaders, government officials, and private sector investors and other stakeholders on investment opportunities in the Great Lakes region.

This conference was convened as a follow-up to a decision adopted by the leaders of the region during the second meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement for the DRC and the region, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 31 January 2014.

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