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Women Peace and Security Shared Commitment Holders, Press Stakeout on the Situation in the Great Lakes, April 2024

We, the Security Council signatories of the Shared Commitments on Women and Peace and Security (WPS) – **Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and my own country, Malta** – reaffirm our commitment to fully and meaningfully integrate the WPS agenda into all aspects of our work, and to amplify and support the crucial work of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.

Ahead of today’s Security Council briefing on the Great Lakes Region, we emphasise the importance of the WPS agenda in implementing the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Region, and its linkages with the broader security situation in the Great Lakes Region. We commend UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for promoting women’s inclusion in regional political processes and welcome the recommendations from the meeting held in Nairobi on 17 April on this critical priority.

Despite the disproportionate impact of the conflict in Eastern DRC on women, they have not been fully associated to regional peace efforts despite encouraging steps in this regard. We urge the facilitators of the Luanda and Nairobi processes to appoint women mediators and gender advisors, to leverage the African Women Leaders Network through its National Chapters in the region, including in DRC, Rwanda, Kenya, and Angola, to advocate for inclusive processes and peace. These instruments will further strengthen the UN’s Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention, and Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which calls for a more significant role for civil society organisations, women, and youth in political and peace processes.

We further urge the Guarantor Institutions and Signatory Countries to engage with the African Union (AU) Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, and the co-chairs of FemWise-Africa – the AU network of women mediators, to create special measures and mechanisms for ensuring more inclusive processes that ensure women’s full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in the revitalised Regional Oversight Mechanism.

Amidst this context, we remain gravely concerned about escalating security, human rights, and humanitarian crises in the Great Lakes Region. We demand an immediate cessation of all acts of sexual and gender-based violence and attacks against human rights defenders and women cross-border traders. We reiterate the Council’s call for humanitarian assistance to be accessible and responsive to the specific needs of women and girls.

All countries in the region and all parties to the conflict must abide by the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. We reaffirm the UN Special Envoy’s call to accelerate the implementation of the Kampala Declaration on Sexual and Gender-Based

Violence, together with national and regional strategies for advancing the WPS agenda, in the context of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC.

Finally, we welcome the development of a Gender based Barometer for the Great Lakes Region to monitor compliance with regional commitments and progress in implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Thank you.