

EurAc Statement

The European Union must maintain its commitment to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region: a call to renew the mandate of the EUSR

Brussels, 10 July 2025

As the Council of the EU is in the process of deciding on the renewal of the mandate of the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Great Lakes region, **the Europe-Central Africa Network (EurAc) and our members urge the EU Member States to uphold the mandate, that we see as crucial to peace, stability, and the credibility of the EU's engagement in the region.**

Since the resurgence of violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the beginning of 2025, the international community has redirected its attention towards the Great Lakes. **These developments are further pushing the EU to rethink its commitment to the region and to scale up its political actions in order to respond to the new challenges and realities on the ground. In this regard, the EUSR's role stands out as a vital diplomatic instrument that could help translate the EU's commitment to more tangible actions.** Failing to renew the EUSR mandate would not only weaken the EU's capacity for action in the region but also send an alarming signal to local populations. At a time when multiple international actors are positioning themselves as mediators in peace negotiations, as evidenced by the 27 June agreement between the DRC and Rwanda, it is now more crucial than ever to sustain a strong and coherent European presence.

Nevertheless, this mandate cannot be reduced to a mere representative role. It must enable concrete, sustained, and visible diplomatic action in ongoing mediation processes. To achieve these objectives, **it is imperative that the EUSR be provided with the necessary human and financial resources to fully implement the objectives set in the mandate.** Too often, a lack of resources has hindered the ability of European diplomats to carry out field activities, engage in regular dialogue with regional actors, and support local peace initiatives. An ambitious mandate must be backed by a budget proportionate to its objectives. Without adequate support, the EUSR's role risks remain largely symbolic, while the needs for diplomacy, mediation, and regional coordination have never been greater.

The renewal of the EUSR's mandate also offers a timely opportunity to reassess the priorities for the coming years and, more broadly, to evaluate the relevance of the current European strategy in the Great Lakes region. For EurAc, **lasting peace and stability require a truly holistic approach that integrates security, political, and economic dimensions.** This approach must also be grounded in respect for human rights, justice, and good governance, particularly in the context of implementing strategic partnerships on critical raw materials.

Additionally, **it is essential that the EU places greater emphasis on regional interdependencies.** Burundi, too often overlooked, must regain a central role on the European

political agenda alongside other countries in the region, with full recognition of its crucial role in the regional stabilization process. Having just entered a new electoral cycle culminating in the 2027 presidential election, the country is facing a multidimensional crisis with potentially dramatic consequences for both its future and the stability of the Great Lakes region.

Finally, the EurAc network and our members wish to emphasize that **active support for civil society remains essential for the pursuit of lasting peace**. These actors are facing threats that not only impede their mission but also jeopardize their very existence. Despite this, they are largely excluded from ongoing peace processes, even though their participation is crucial to ensure solutions truly grounded in local realities. **Their protection, along with the strengthening of their capacities, must be a priority to build an inclusive peace that meets the needs and aspirations of the affected populations.**

The Europe-Central Africa network and its members

About EurAc

The Europe-Central Africa Network (EurAc), created in 2003, brings together 31 non-governmental organizations active in Central Africa, with a particular focus on the Great Lakes region. EurAc carries out advocacy work to promote strong, coherent, and sustainable engagement from the European Union and its Member States to help the region build a better future.