2024/2098

29.7.2024

COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2024/2098

of 26 July 2024

appointing the European Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes region

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 33 and Article 31(2) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Whereas:

(1) On 20 February 2023 the Council approved conclusions on a renewed Great Lakes strategy of the Union, which included an invitation by the Council to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ('the High Representative') to submit a proposal to reinstate the position of EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Great Lakes region.

(2) The EUSR for the Great Lakes region should be appointed for an initial period of 12 months.

(3) The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative, should ensure consistency between the different areas of the Union's external action in the Great Lakes region and should cooperate closely to that effect. The EUSR should support and cooperate with the institutions in this respect.

(4) The EUSR will implement the mandate in the context of a situation which may deteriorate and could impede the achievement of the objectives of the Union's external action as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

European Union Special Representative

Mr Johan BORGSTAM is hereby appointed as the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the Great Lakes region from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025. The Council may decide to extend the mandate of the EUSR, or to terminate it earlier, on the basis of an assessment by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and a proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ('the High Representative').

Article 2

Policy objectives

The mandate of the EUSR shall be consistent with the Union's foreign policy objectives in the Great Lakes region and in line with the Council conclusions of 20 February 2023 on a renewed Great Lakes strategy. Those objectives include:

(a) contributing to peace, stability and security in the Great Lakes region by promoting the de-escalation of tensions and the prevention of conflicts, and supporting dialogue and long-term regional solutions to crises and conflicts, in particular for the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC);

(b) contributing to the transformation of the drivers and root causes of insecurity and instability into shared opportunities and unlocking the Great Lakes region's full potential;

(c) building a stronger, more comprehensive and more strategic partnership with the countries in the Great Lakes region to enhance prosperity and security, on the basis of common values and interests.

Article 3

Mandate

In order to achieve the policy objectives set out in Article 2, the mandate of the EUSR shall be to:

(a) support the High Representative in the implementation of the Council conclusions of 20 February 2023 on a renewed Great Lakes strategy;

(b) establish and maintain close contact and cooperation with the countries of the Great Lakes region, in particular: the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda; countries in the wider region with specific political, diplomatic, security or economic interests in the Great Lakes region, including the signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for the DRC and the region; the key regional organisations and fora, namely the African Union (AU), the East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the United Nations, in particular the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO); the international financial institutions; international likeminded partners and other leading regional and international actors; and relevant non-state actors, such as local authorities and communities, civil society, research institutes, the media and the private sector;

(c) support regional mediation and facilitation efforts, such as the Luanda and Nairobi Processes and, if needed and requested by relevant parties and stakeholders, engage directly in mediation, mediation support activities and dialogue in order to preserve and restore peace at any stage and at all levels, including by supporting the negotiation of ceasefire and peace agreements, and promote the inclusion of civil society, women and youth during all stages of peace-making;

(d) provide advice and report on the possibilities for the Union to support conflict prevention, peace processes, stabilisation and peace-consolidation initiatives; in this context, the EUSR, in coordination with relevant stakeholders, may play a role in supporting the implementation of ceasefire and peace agreements and other related agreements, including by providing support for the monitoring of compliance and engaging diplomatically with parties in cases of non-compliance;

(e) provide conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive advice concerning regional stabilisation, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups, and security-sector reform in the DRC, including in the context of the withdrawal of MONUSCO;

(f) contribute to the regional efforts aimed at conflict prevention and the transformation of the root causes of insecurity and instability into shared opportunities, by promoting regional cooperation and integration, including in terms of good governance and the rule of law; in particular, focus on the issue of the illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and support initiatives for the development of an African-led model of resource management that is sustainable, fair, environmentally sound and based on human rights, including through engagement with the private sector and civil society;

(g) promote humanitarian principles and access, respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, access to justice, judicial cooperation and transitional justice mechanisms, while paying particular attention to addressing sexual and gender-based violence and violations of women's and children's rights, including through forced recruitment;

(h) contribute to a better understanding of the role of the Union among opinion leaders in the Great Lakes region and support strategic and proactive communication of the Union's goals in the region.

Article 4

Implementation of the mandate

1. The EUSR shall be responsible for the implementation of the mandate, acting under the authority of the High Representative.

2. The PSC shall maintain a privileged link with the EUSR and shall be the EUSR's primary point of contact with the Council. The PSC shall provide the EUSR with strategic guidance and political direction within the framework of the mandate, without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative.

3. The EUSR shall work in close coordination with the relevant departments of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission.

4. The EUSR shall work in close coordination with Union delegations in the Great Lakes region.

5. The EUSR shall be based in the EEAS headquarters, traveling regularly to the Great Lakes region.

Article 5

Financing

1. The financial reference amount intended to cover the expenditure related to the mandate of the EUSR for the period from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 shall be EUR 1 500 000.

2. The expenditure shall be managed in accordance with the procedures and rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.

3. The management of the expenditure shall be subject to a contract between the EUSR and the Commission. The EUSR shall be accountable to the Commission for all expenditure.

Article 6

Constitution and composition of the EUSR's team

1. Within the limits of the EUSR's mandate and the corresponding financial means made available, the EUSR shall be responsible for constituting a team ('the EUSR's team'). The EUSR's team shall include expertise on specific policy issues as required by the mandate. The EUSR shall keep the Council and the Commission promptly informed of the composition of the EUSR's team.

2. Member States, the institutions of the Union and the EEAS may propose the secondment of staff to the EUSR. The salary of such seconded personnel shall be covered by the Member State concerned, the institution of the Union concerned or the EEAS, as appropriate. Experts seconded by Member States to institutions of the Union or the EEAS may also be posted to the EUSR's team. International contracted staff shall have the nationality of a Member State.

3. All seconded personnel shall remain under the administrative authority of the sending Member State, the sending institution of the Union or the EEAS and shall carry out their duties and act in the interest of the mandate of the EUSR.

4. The EUSR's team shall be co-located with the relevant EEAS departments or Union delegations in order to ensure the coherence and consistency of their respective activities. The EUSR shall facilitate the reopening of a Union office in Goma (DRC), including by temporarily deploying staff from the EUSR's team there.

Article 7

Privileges and immunities of the EUSR and the EUSR's team

The privileges, immunities and further guarantees necessary for the completion and smooth functioning of the EUSR's mandate and the members of the EUSR's team shall be agreed with the host party or parties, as appropriate. Member States, the EEAS and the Commission shall grant all necessary support to that end.

Article 8

Security of EU classified information

The EUSR and the members of the EUSR's team shall respect the security principles and minimum standards established by Council Decision 2013/488/EU ([1]).

Article 9

Access to information and logistical support

1. Member States, the Commission services, the EEAS and the General Secretariat of the Council shall ensure that the EUSR is given access to any relevant information.

2. The Union delegations in the Great Lakes region or Member States, or both, as appropriate, shall provide logistical support in the region.

Article 10

Security

In accordance with the Union's policy on the security of personnel deployed outside the Union in an operational capacity under Title V of the Treaty on European Union, the EUSR shall take all reasonably practicable measures, in accordance with the mandate and the security situation in the geographical area of responsibility, for the security of all personnel under the EUSR's direct authority, in particular by:

(a) establishing a specific security plan based on guidance from the EEAS, including specific physical, organisational and procedural security measures governing the management of the secure movement of personnel to, and within, the area of responsibility as well as the management of security incidents, and including a contingency plan and evacuation plan;

(b) ensuring that all personnel deployed outside the Union are covered by high-risk insurance, as required by the conditions in the area of responsibility;

(c) ensuring that all members of the EUSR's team to be deployed outside the Union, including locally contracted personnel, have received, before or upon arriving in the area of responsibility, appropriate security training based on the risk ratings assigned to that area by the EEAS;

(d) ensuring that all agreed recommendations made following regular security assessments are implemented, and providing the Council, the High Representative and the Commission with written reports on their implementation and on other security issues within the framework of the regular progress reports and a final comprehensive mandate implementation report.

Article 11

Reporting

The EUSR shall regularly provide the High Representative, the EEAS and the PSC with oral and written reports. The EUSR shall also report as necessary to Council working parties. Regular written reports shall be circulated through the COREU network. Upon the recommendation of the High Representative or the PSC, the EUSR may provide the Foreign Affairs Council with reports. The EUSR may be involved in briefing the European Parliament.

Article 12

Coordination

1. The EUSR shall contribute to the unity, consistency and effectiveness of the Union's action and shall help ensure that all Union instruments and Member State actions are engaged consistently in order to attain the Union's policy objectives. The activities of the EUSR shall be coordinated with those of the EEAS and the Commission. The EUSR shall provide regular briefings to the Union delegations and Member States' missions in the Great Lakes region.

([1]) Council Decision 2013/488/EU of 23 September 2013 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 274, 15.10.2013, p. 1).

2. In the field, close liaison shall be maintained with the heads of Union delegations and Member States' heads of mission. They shall make every effort to assist the EUSR in the implementation of the mandate. To that effect, the EUSR shall also liaise with other international and regional actors in the field.

Article 13

Review

The implementation of this Decision and its consistency with other contributions from the Union to the Great Lakes region shall be kept under regular review. The EUSR shall present the Council, the High Representative and the Commission with regular progress reports and a final comprehensive mandate implementation report by 31 May 2025.

Article 14

Entry into force

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.

Done at Brussels, 26 July 2024.

For the Council

The President

BÓKA J.