



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Forum of Small and Medium Enterprises to galvanize support for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference in Kinshasa, DRC**

**Nairobi, 17 October 2015** - A regional forum of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) took place in Nairobi on 16 and 17 October 2015. The Forum is part of a series of upstream activities leading to the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference (PSIC) scheduled to take place in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, on 24-25 February 2016.

Following the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2013, the Heads of State and Government of the 13 signatory countries endorsed a Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the said peace agreement. The Regional Action Plan included provisions for holding a Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes region to strengthen economic cooperation, expand trade opportunities, instigate job creations and bring about long-term stability and peace in the region.

The two-day forum brought together 65 representatives of SMEs from the African Great Lakes region who are already active or are planning to engage in cross-border economic activities, to learn about the regional agreements, which will enable them to end the cycles of conflict in the region. The participants also examined opportunities that the upcoming Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference will offer, and reviewed ways of establishing or strengthening existing networks of SMEs for the implementation of the PSCF agreement. In addition, the forum discussed and made concrete recommendations on how to address trans-border trade challenges related to their economic activities.

In his opening remarks, Modibo I. Toure, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Advisor to the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region encouraged participants to effectively take part in the value chain of the

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projects to be showcased at the PSIC to bring about high returns that will transform the lives of the communities in the Great Lakes region. “You can make your voice heard in the face of the challenges in the Great Lakes region. But you must be organized rather than work in isolation. Together, with a clear strategy, SME’s can really make a difference for development, peace and shared prosperity in the region,” ASG Toure said.

The Forum was organized by the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (OSESG-GL) and the Executive Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), in collaboration with the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI) as well as the UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO).

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