Mr. President,

I wish to thank Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sabliere for leading the Security Council Mission to Africa and presenting its report. This Mission reaffirmed Council’s commitment to peace and security in the Great Lakes Region. With regard to our Mission I wish to make the following comments and suggestions:

First, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the main challenge now is to continue to support the peace process. There are some justifiable expressions of skepticism. Efforts should continue to ensure that the Transitional Government begins to function as a unified national government and the parties therein abide by their commitments, especially with regard to elections, security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Second, effective efforts have to be made to disarm local and foreign armed groups, like the Mayi-Mayi, the Hema and Lendi militias, and the ex-FAR/Interahamwe, which remain outside the political process. Political measures to ensure a smooth transition need to be accompanied by strengthening the DRC’s national institutions and their capacity to extent state authority throughout the country.

Third, regional stability is a crucial to protect and promoting the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pakistan attaches the highest importance to respect for the sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of all States. International borders are inviolable. In the absence of actual external military aggression, the threat or use of force across international borders cannot be justified. As the Security Council’s Presidential Statement has stated, Rwanda should withdraw without delay any
forces that may be in the DRC and exercise restraint in its actions and pronouncements. At the same time, the problem for regional security posed by the ex-FAR/Interahamwe also need to be addressed. In this regard, we suggest the development of more effective strategy to disarm and repatriate these groups. The Tripartite mechanism and the JVM between Rwanda and DRC should be more effectively utilized in this context.

**Fourth**, in Burundi the transitional process – despite the challenges to it – is moving forward in the right direction. The international community must support this adequately. However, the threat posed by FNL (Rwasa), and its cross-border links with other extremist forces - as testified by the Gatumba massacre - will have to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

**Fifth**, the deployment of ONUB in Burundi and ongoing build-up of MONUC in eastern DRC should contribute to improving mutual confidence between the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi and thus enhance security and stability in the region. Pakistan has contributed a brigade for MONUC in the South Kivus. This is in addition to our contribution of a mechanized infantry battalion for MONUC’s Ituri brigade. A Pakistani battalion has also been deployed with ONUB in Burundi’s Cibitoke province across the DRC border. The deployment of Pakistani units on both sides of the Burundi-DRC border will, in our view, considerably enhance coordinated UN peacekeeping actions in the region.

**Sixth**, the issue of illegal exploitation of natural resources of the DRC is a root cause of the complex threats to peace and stability in the region. As one of our colleagues on the Council’s Mission privately observed, the DRC is “too big, too rich and too weak”. The illegal exploitation of the DRC’s resources motivates the militias and funds their campaign of violence and pillage. But the major profits of such illegal exploration end up in coffers often far away from the Great Lakes region. Until this rape of the DRC’s resources is stopped, it will be difficult to promote peace, security and prosperity in this unfortunate country. Until then corruption and conflict will continue in the region. This issue has to be addressed. The Security Council – or another UN organ of the Council cannot act – should follow up on the Kassem report;
investigate and identify those involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources and those who finance or profit from this and enable the international community to end this unfortunate legacy that has afflicted the DRC – and other nations – for so long.

**Seventh**, peace and development are indivisible. The consolidation of peace in the region requires sustained international commitment, particularly from the donor community, to support economic and social development in the region. Without this conflict may be a recurring feature in the Great Lakes region.

**Finally**, we need to ensure ways and means to realize the objectives and decisions of the recent Summit Conference on the Great Lakes to promote comprehensive peace and prosperity. In particular, it is essential to put in place effective regional mechanisms for the peaceful settlement and resolution of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.