

(98/C 174/240)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4113/97**by Yves Verwaerde (PPE) to the Commission***(16 January 1998)**Subject:* Geopolitical situation in the Great Lakes region

What is the Commission's position on the geopolitical situation in the Great Lakes region?

Answer given by Mr Pinheiro on behalf of the Commission*(29 January 1998)*

In recent years the Great Lakes region has been rocked by a series of unprecedented political, social and humanitarian crises. The Kigali and Kinshasa governments were ousted by a military alliance which linked the ethnic conflicts in the Great Lakes with the destiny of the Congo (former Zaire) and the strategic interests of Uganda and Angola. The genocide in Rwanda, the civil war in Burundi and ethnic persecutions before and during the recent conflict in the Congo claimed hundreds of thousands of victims, while millions of people were displaced. Violent clashes and the daily struggle for survival have left deep resentment between the various population groups.

But the political and military upheavals have also given rise to the hope that new forms of regional integration and co-operation can be achieved if the countries in the region succeed in re-establishing peace and relaunching the economy. The Great Lakes and Central Africa region have an exceptional abundance and variety of natural resources. Demographic pressure, which has become a serious problem in some countries in so far as population groups are confined to narrow national borders, also represents considerable potential if a regional area can be created in which people and goods can move freely and safely and economic opportunities are available. The Commission has long envisioned the regional development of the Great Lakes region and is ready to initiate dialogue with the countries of the region on regional integration.

The Commission is aware that for the process of peace and regional integration to be successful, the security of the states concerned must be ensured; this continues to be threatened — from the outside as well as from within — by various armed opposition groups. But peace cannot be attained solely by military action against rebellions. It is essential that the legitimate defence of national sovereignty be combined with a reconciliation policy that goes beyond national borders. The interests of all population groups must be given due consideration, both at the economic level and in terms of participation in political life. Respect for human rights and international humanitarian law must be re-established. Security is not the privilege of States; it is also a fundamental right for individuals. The safety of individuals has several aspects, all of which must be addressed: protection against persecution, safety of people and property, but also food security, the fight against poverty and protection of the environmental and economic basis essential for the survival of societies.

Re-establishing peace in the broad sense is a formidable challenge, but it seems the only possible way to secure lasting stability in this beleaguered region. The Community is ready to help the countries that embark on this process, but the political prerequisites must come from the region itself and its political leaders: dialogue and reconciliation at national and regional level, the creation of a constitutional and legal framework for open societies and economies, and the establishment of an administration that can manage public affairs efficiently. These conditions reflect the spirit and letter of the Lomé Convention, which is the principal standard for relations between the Community and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

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WRITTEN QUESTION P-4152/97**by Francesco Baldarelli (PSE) to the Commission***(7 January 1998)**Subject:* The application of Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 in the Italian regions

In response to written opinions from the Commission and a judgment by the Regional Administrative Court the Regional Council of the Marches issued an act regulating the application of Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 ⁽¹⁾, in particular measure A2, 'organic farming'.