

BURUNDI CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING, PARIS, 26-27 OCTOBER, 2009

**STATEMENT BY
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On behalf of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and on my own behalf I wish to extend our appreciation to the World Bank for organizing this important gathering and for inviting us to participate in this first consultative group meeting with the aim of supporting the Burundi government in its efforts to accelerate the economic growth and development.

We also wish to congratulate the government of Burundi for the progress that it has made to consolidate peace and stability in the country. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to work very closely with the Government of Burundi to ensure that the gains so far achieved are consolidated and further enhanced.

The ICGLR is not a donor institution or a Regional Economic Community. As the name clearly indicates the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is the forum, a process and a mechanism to promote dialogue, galvanise joint actions and strengthen cooperation among member States which include Burundi to find lasting solutions to the problems of insecurity, endemic conflicts and under-development in the region.

It is a unique organisation which groups 11 Member States (Angola, Burundi, CAR, DRC, Congo Republic, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia) with the sole political mandate from the Heads of State and Government to address the fundamental issues of peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the region.

As repeatedly stated in this meeting the regional dimension and integration provides Burundi with the enormous opportunities and outlets as landlocked country to achieve its development agenda and accelerate economic growth as well as consolidation of peace. The accession to EAC and ratification of the ICGLR comprehensive Pact on Peace, Stability and Development in the Great lakes region represents such opportunities.

Our strategy for achieving peace and security, stability and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region is anchored on a comprehensive approach, linking regional initiatives to local realities, adding value and prioritization. ICGLR approach support the 3 pillars of the Burundi government as outlined by the Vice-President in promoting good governance, sustainable growth and resolve critical social and humanitarian issues.

ICGLR has supported Burundi in its peace efforts with the last rebel group, FNL that has now been fully integrated in the government institutions and military. We promote joint security management of common borders and inter-state cooperation on security issues. We support Burundi towards disarmament and tackling the problem of proliferation of small arms through the regional initiatives.

On good governance, the ICGLR in collaboration with EAC have brought together the Chairpersons and members of the Independent National Electoral Commission from the EAC partner states and DRC to Bujumbura to share experiences, good practices, the “Dos and Don’ts” with the newly established Burundi Independent Electoral Commission as a way of its capacity building and getting started on a right footing. The objective is to avoid a repeat of Kenya’s experience that resulted in post-election violence with disastrous consequences. ICGLR further intends to organize election monitoring and institute an early warning mechanism for conflict prevention as provided in the Great lakes Pact.

Regarding the rational management of resources, I am happy to report that with the financial support of the government of Germany through GTZ the regional initiative on curbing the illegal exploitation of natural resources is well underway of which Burundi and other member states would be a beneficiary by putting in place a certification mechanism that would put an end the exploitation of these resources by the illegal armed groups and as a source of conflict in the region.

Our programme on economic development and regional integration clearly demonstrates our strategy of enhanced coordination. This is essential given the many Regional economic communities and technical institutions engaged in one aspect or the other and the overlapping of memberships. ICGLR for example was able to bring together several such organizations to agree on the roadmaps for establishment of a Regional Micro-Finance Support Facility. As a result some of the regional finance institutions are ready to pilot the programme in selected countries including Burundi once the facility is established.

Similarly, another group of Regional organizations meeting in Bujumbura in September this year under the auspices of ICGLR and UNECA have agreed on a roadmap for harmonization of development programme in agriculture, livestock development, fisheries and increase in production in order to meet the food security needs of the countries in the region.

Another important regional initiative of benefit to Burundi is development of Trans-border development basins and promotion of human security. In this regard ICGLR with the assistance of GTZ and in collaboration with Burundi National Coordination Mechanism organized in September the meeting of Governors from all Provinces bordering Rwanda and/or the DRC in Cibitoke to discuss on priority projects with the aim to promote cross border exchanges among their respective population. These include

for example the construction of a shared market place in Kabarore, the joint management of water resources or reconstruction of a bridge over the river Ruzizi.

It is in the area of infrastructure, Burundi as other countries in the region faces the greatest challenge. The resources requirements for infrastructure are enormous. It is in this regard that ICGLR continues to advocate this as an area of priority in the region. We note with appreciation the encouraging EAC infrastructure development programmes that would benefit Burundi if regional integration is given the deserved attention in its accelerated economic growth programmes.

As regards support to humanitarian and social programmes, ICGLR has given priority to the problem of IDPs and property rights to returning populations. We have signed with UN-HABITAT the MOU to facilitate domestication of relevant protocols; tackling issues related to housing returnees, in particular recovery of land and properties of returnees in Burundi and other post-conflict countries in the region.

Another important area of focus is prevention and fight against sexual based violence and assistance to victims. Burundi has provided leadership in organizing a regional capacity building workshop with ICGLR support to empower women leaders, traditional leaders, judges, security forces as well as parliamentarians in combating sexual violence and ending impunity. The initiative has been fully supported by the Burundian government highest authorities.

In order to ensure that cross cutting issues of gender, human rights, environment, HIV-AIDS are integrated in all the national programmes, ICGLR has secured experts to constantly advise the Burundi authorities on the implementation and evaluation of ICGLR projects. With the support of UNIFEM guidelines to mainstream gender were developed and support provided to the ICGLR National Coordination mechanism.

Finally, in enhancing coordination, the ICGLR with the support of AfDB is organising a Donors Roundtable Conference from 5-6 November 09 in Bujumbura to support the implementation of the Pact on Peace, Stability and development in the Great lakes region, which includes various programmes of action under peace and security, good governance, economic development and regional integration as well as humanitarian and social issues which are of benefit to Burundi.. The Roundtable will bring together the development partners, heads of regional economic communities, banking institutions and other stake holders to take stock of the progress in the region, challenges and opportunities. We have invited all members of the Consultative Group on Burundi.