

**SECRETARIAT
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION**



**SECRETARIAT
CONFÉRENCE INTERNATIONALE
SUR LA RÉGION DES GRANDS
LACS**

REMARKS BY

AMBASSADOR JOÃO SAMUEL CAHOLO

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ICGLR

DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATORS

2ND DECEMBER, 2021

Your Excellency, Ambassador Esmeralda Bravo Conde Da Silva Mendonça, Secretary of State in the Ministry of External Relations of the Republic of Angola;

Amb. Miguel César Domingos Bembe, ICGLR National Coordinator of the Republic of Angola and Chair of National Coordinators;

Excellencies ICGLR National Coordinators,

**Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure and it is with great delight that I present my remarks this morning. First and foremost, allow me to thank the National Coordinator of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the National Coordinators for going far and beyond in making this meeting a success. In addition, I wish to extend my gratitude to all National Coordinators present for attending this meeting and those following the meeting virtually for finding time, despite your busy schedules, to follow the proceedings. We strongly value your commitment and dedication.

This Coordinators' Meeting, yet again, presents a new opportunity to increase communication and synergy, deepen our unity and

cooperation as we strive for concrete progress in the implementation of the collective activities for the betterment of our region.

As a region, we share similar sufferings and struggles in our histories and are currently faced with the same tasks of development. We are faced with youth unemployment, sexual and gender-based violence and poverty. We are equally faced with illegal exploitation of natural resources not only depriving our tax revenues needed for socio-economic development but intensifying political and security instability in our countries. We are also faced with increasing numbers of refugees, homeless and Stateless people.

Yes, we have a picture of both tremendous challenges but also one of the hopeful signs. On our part, as your Conference Secretariat, we intend to seize this opportunity, to step into the new ICGLR era, after 15 years based on a new blueprint. We are in the process of restructuring the Conference Secretariat in order to ensure management efficiency and effectiveness. In order to offer better and quality service to our Member States, we have since recruited eight senior staff namely: The Director for Peace and Security, the Director for Democracy and Good Governance, the Regional Director for Levy Mwanawasa Center for Democracy and Good Governance, Lusaka Centre; the Director for Gender, Women and Children, the Regional Director for RTF, and the Internal Auditor.

In addition, we have recruited the Head of Fora and Observatories and the Head of Research, Training and IT, for the Levy Mwanawasa Centre. We equally employed a Human Resources Officer, two Accounts Assistants and IT Assistant based in Bujumbura Burundi.

Excellencies,

ICGLR National Coordinators,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Conference Secretariat has commenced the process of preparing a Strategic Plan 2022-2026, as a blue print for our interventions outlined in the pact. Preliminary consultations indicate that based on the complex challenges facing the region, our niche and resource mobilization capacity, the focus of ICGLR will be as follows:

- (a) Enhancing the technical and management capacities of the Conference Secretariat in order to build Member States trust and confidence. This will make the Conference Secretariat more professional and driven by the needs of Member States.
- (b) Building peace and security in the Great Lakes Region through conflict prevention and resolution. This implies deploying all ICGLR mechanisms and tools for Peace and security. On top of this agenda is ensuring strengthened joint border management in the region to mitigate cross-border criminal activities and terrorism.
- (c) Developing mineral governance for peace, security and economic

development. This will ensure swift implementation of the six tools of the Region initiative against illegal exploitation of natural resources. It will also promote mineral value addition for economic development and regional integration.

- (d) Reinforcing democratic culture and process in the Great lakes region. It will involve improving democratic processes in Member States and increasing women and youth participation in democratic processes.
- (e) Strengthening gender-transformative solutions in all ICGLR work. It will involve mainstreaming gender in all ICGLR initiatives and programmes.

Excellencies,

National Coordinators,

Over the next two days, I will meet you separately to have detailed discussions with you National Coordinators attending this Meeting. I know, you individually and collectively have concrete and innovative ideas of how to successfully restructure our Conference Secretariat and also what should be contained in our Strategic Plan. It is in this regard that we intend to host working sessions, in Bujumbura, early next year, to work on the Strategic Plan for 2022- 2026 with you all and together think through the Conference Secretariat to be able to better deliver on the Pact mandate.

Chairperson,

In order to fully and effectively implement the programmes that are envisioned in the Strategic Plan, your Conference Secretariat requires vast investments. I call upon you, dear National Coordinators to ensure that our States and Governments fulfil their financial obligations to the Secretariat and its centres.

Chairperson, it is worth noting that only 50 percent of our Member States have fulfilled their financial contributions to the Secretariat and its centres, as you will be informed in the course of this meeting. Allow me, therefore, to extend gratitude to the Member States for the continued support to the Secretariat.

In addition, permit me to use this platform to thank our partners, namely GIZ, Special Envoy on the UN Secretary General on the great lakes region, the European Union and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China. I wish to state that my interaction with these partners show a picture of continued support and mutual collaboration in meeting our common goals.

Chairperson, through you, I would like to call upon other Member States to equally settle their arrears as soon as possible to enable the Secretariat perform its role as coordinator of all regional initiatives, as mandated in the Pact.

**Excellencies,
ICGLR National Coordinators,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my strong belief that, as a region, we do our best when we do it together. This meeting has always provided a forum for us to show our unity of purpose. It provides, always, the right direction to forge synergy between all of us for one goal we all want to achieve, which is ensuring peace, security, stability, and development.

The continued collaboration and coordination among the Member States of the region are needed for the effective implementation of programmes outlined in the Pact. Thus, we need to support each other and move towards the same direction.

As National Coordinators, you are the face of ICGLR at Member State level. This role requires that you maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges, elevate the ICGLR image and articulate its strategic focus. You have a role to ensure that Member States work together like passengers in the same boat, rather than sail against the current of our times.

Dear National Coordinators, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that this meeting will give to the discussion a concrete and pragmatic dimension that strengthens our regional approach to

dealing with the complex challenges so that together we could have a region that is secure, stable and on a path for sustainable development.

Thank you very much for your attention.