



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION
(ICGLR) STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY (IWD)
08/03/2022**

The International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) joins the world in commemorating the International Women’s Day (IWD) under the 2022 campaign theme, “Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow”.

This year’s IWD is characterized by hope! Particularly in the wake of the deadly Covid 19 pandemic from which we seem to be recovering very gradually. It is a well-known fact that women have faced a greater social and economic burden. Before the emergence of the COVID 19 Pandemic, women continued to face significant barriers to gender equality, especially around finances, employment, education, unpaid labour and gender-based violence. The Pandemic only served to deepen those divides. This year’s celebrations accord us an opportunity to reflect on a sustainable tomorrow.

The theme for International Women’s Day, “**Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow**”, recognizes the contribution of women and girls around the world, who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation, and response, to build a more sustainable future for all.

The issues of climate change and sustainability continue to have severe and lasting impacts on our environment as well as on the economic and social development. The most vulnerable and marginalized group such as women, girls and children experience the deepest impacts. Women

are increasingly being recognized as more vulnerable to climate change impacts than men, as they constitute a higher percentage of the world's population and are more dependent on the natural resources that climate change threatens the most.

Nevertheless, women and girls are effective and powerful leaders and change-makers for climate adaptation and mitigation. They are involved in sustainability initiatives around the world, and their participation and leadership results in more effective collective climate action. Continuing to examine the opportunities, as well as the constraints, to empower women and girls to have a voice and be equal players in peace building process, leadership, decision-making process on the issues related to climate change and sustainability is essential for sustainable development and greater gender equality. Without gender equality today, a sustainable future, and an equal future, remains beyond our reach.

Attaining Gender equality has been at the core of ICGLR functions. Member States have undertaken a number of measures to uphold women's rights through the enacting various laws, policies and structures that respond to issues concerning women in the Great Lakes region.

Some of these measures include, among others, the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region (2006) that establishes the Protocol on Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children (2006) (Art 11), the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the GLR (2008), and the Kampala Declaration on SGBV 2011. The Protocol is one of the few regional and internal legal binding instruments to combat sexual violence by protecting victims as well as prosecuting and punishing perpetrators both in peacetime and in time of war. It provides practical recommendations that can be undertaken by Member States to respond to SGBV and end impunity. These

measures seek to find a sustainable solution for the bias against women, and Member States still affirm their commitment for Gender Equality, Women, Peace and Security.

The ICGLR appeals to the world and Member States in particular to enforce the policies and systems that accommodate the inclusion and restrict marginalization of women and girls. NOW! Women must have the opportunity to play a full role in shaping the pivotal decisions which impact their wellbeing and the world at large.

We must change the narrative and re-write a new story for women and girls. A story of hope to live in a world free from discrimination and abuse.

Happy International Women's Day!

**Ambassador João Samuel Caholo
Executive Secretary**