



PRESS RELEASE

CELEBRATION OF THE WOMEN'S MONTH 2021 EDITION, LAUNCH OF THE WEB PAGE AND KEY DOCUMENTS OF THE ICGLR PROGRAM ON GENDER, WOMEN AND CHILDREN

During the month of March, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) once again joins the world in commemorating the International Women's Day whose theme this year is: "Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World." This year's theme presents an opportunity to reflect and acknowledge the contributions that women make in their respective societies and the achievements of ICGLR Member States towards addressing overall gender discrimination in our Great Lakes region.

The ICGLR's reflection will focus more on the steps taken since 2019 to combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the region, which was aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports from Member States (MS) indicate an increase in SGBV cases during the COVID-19 period. The increase in (SGBV) cases was as high as 10% in some Member States, which requires special attention and follow-up measures to address the problem

By ratifying the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region (2006 and amended in 2012) and its Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children (2006), ICGLR Member States committed themselves to combating sexual violence against women and children through the prevention, criminalization and suppression of such acts both in times of peace and war.

In this spirit, in collaboration with the National Coordination Mechanism of the Republic of Congo, the ICGLR Ministers of Gender and Justice met in Brazzaville in November 2019 to review the progress made in the implementation of the Kampala Declaration on SGBV in the region. This high-level meeting was supported by the regional project co-funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ and the United Nations (Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General (OSES) for the Great Lakes Region, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women). The meeting resulted in the adoption of three key reports developed by the ICGLR and UN Women and finalised with the support of GIZ to address the issue of SGBV in the region, namely the Update Report on the Implementation of the Kampala Declaration, the Regional Guide to Expediting Criminal Proceedings on SGBV and the Model Law on Special Courts, Special Sessions and Proceedings on SGBV

In addition to the above milestones, and acknowledging the need for concerted effort and holistic approaches to combat SGBV in the Great Lakes Region (GLR), the ICGLR Regional Training Facility (RTF) on Prevention and Suppression of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), in partnership with Panzi and Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundations, and with technical and financial support from the GIZ under the same framework of the Regional Project on Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region (GLR), in October 2020 developed an Integrated Model that holistically contributes to combating SGBV in the GLR. The model combines Panzi's successful holistic model of care to SGBV survivors (psycho-social, medical, legal assistance, and reintegration support) with the RTF's socio-ecological SGBV training model. Training of Trainers for ICGLR- RTF affiliated trainers have been conducted in three – (DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda) out of the five pilot Member States- Central African Republic (CAR), DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia.

To commemorate this year's International Women's Day and the women's month, the Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will launch the above-mentioned reports on its website under the ICGLR Gender Directorate's newly created webpage. This is an opportunity to highlight the numerous achievements of the program on Gender Women and Children since its establishment at the Conference Secretariat in 2014. The Gender Directorate has also updated the ICGLR Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security and the ICGLR Regional Gender Policy as per its mandate.

The Gender Directorate will also collaborate with the Regional Training Facility to popularize the Integrated Model on combating SGBV in the GLR through advocacy initiatives in the MS and consultations with key stakeholders at national level.

The ICGLR will continue its efforts with its regional and international partners to combat SGBV and consolidate an equitable social and political atmosphere in the Great Lakes region that can enable women to enjoy fully their rights in all areas of life.