



Secretariat of the International  
Conference on the Great Lakes  
Region

# Newsletter

June to December 2023

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# Advancing Resource Management: Insights from the 27<sup>th</sup> ICGLR Regional Committee Meeting



The 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ICGLR Regional Committee on the Fight Against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, scheduled from November 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in Kampala, Republic of Uganda, marks a significant milestone in enhancing regional resource governance and combating illicit mineral resource exploitation.

The meeting's principal organizers include the Conference Secretariat, the ICGLR National

Coordination Mechanism of the Republic of Uganda, and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development of Uganda, with the support of the German BMZ, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IMPACT.

The agenda includes presentations by the 12 Committee Members on the implementation status of National Roadmaps and updates on the Regional Initiative on the Fight Against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources.



The meeting aims to delve into various aspects, such as sharing experiences on mineral value addition, understanding the Analytical Fingerprint (AFP) Project, witnessing the official launch of the ICGLR Certificate by Uganda, and providing recommendations for the way forward based on the status updates. The Republic of Uganda has now officially become the fifth member state to issue the certificate, following the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Anticipated outcomes encompass a deeper understanding of the AFP Project, insights into mineral value addition practices, the Committee's familiarity with the ICGLR Audit Committee's functions, and witnessing the symbolic launch of the ICGLR Certificate.

### **The ICGLR Certificate offers triple benefits to member states, the private sector, and the Great Lakes Region.**

The private sector benefits from fair competition, recognition of minerals on the international market, compliance with the US Dodd-Frank Act, and increased regional and international investment in the sector. The ICGLR certificate contributes to the socio-economic development of each country and the Great Lakes Region, the fight against smuggling and fraud, and joint projects among Member States.

In summary, the ICGLR Certificate is a valuable tool promoting transparency, accountability, and sustainable development in the mining sector, benefiting all stakeholders.

The 27th meeting of the ICGLR Regional Committee stands as a pivotal platform to strengthen resource management strategies and combat illegal exploitation. It underscores the collective efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable practices in the Great Lakes Region's mineral resource sector.



## 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence in the Great Lakes: “Mobilisation for Change and Action”



The 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, an annual campaign, serves as a critical platform for raising awareness and action. This year, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is intensifying its efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, notably within the mining sector, in partnership with diverse organizations and governmental entities.



*It is imperative to acknowledge and address the gender disparity in the mining industry which not only limits the potential of women and young girls but also undermines their dignity. By doing so, we can ensure the overall growth and development of the mining industry as a potential source for regional development, stability, and security.*

*Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, ICGLR Executive Secretary*

Collaboration among the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the Great Lakes Region (OSESGL), and other partners forms a committed coalition aiming to advance women’s rights and prevent gender-based violence. Through this concerted approach, tangible strides are being taken toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, while addressing the specific needs of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

This year’s theme **“Unite! Investing to prevent violence against women and girls”** underscores the significance of unity and financial investment in effective strategies to prevent and address such violence. It emphasizes the collective action required and the necessity of adequate resources to implement programs aimed at prevention, awareness-raising, and response to sexual and gender-based violence.

A pivotal two-day workshop held in Kampala on 27-28, November 2023, served as a crucial platform for engaging stakeholders in the mining sector. The focus was on promoting positive masculinity



as a pivotal approach to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in the Great Lakes Region. This workshop facilitated knowledge-sharing, idea exchange, and collective innovative actions aimed at reshaping cultural and social norms related to masculinity while fortifying initiatives to combat gender-based violence in the mining sector of the Great Lakes Region.



Nene Bah, OSESG-GL Senior Gender Advisor



*Prevention and response efforts to violence are the cornerstone of our collective actions and will find an appropriate response through access to justice, but also in the concrete actions that will be taken in the data collection of gender-based sexual violence, the adoption and implementation of legislation and policies with adequate financial resources. In addition, sensitization, assistance to victims by strengthening psychosocial care and socio-economic reintegration are key.*

*Huang Xia, UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region*



The mobilization during the 16 days of activism against sexual and gender-based violence in the Great Lakes Region signifies a resolute commitment to addressing these pressing issues. These collective endeavors exemplify a shared determination to establish a safer and more inclusive environment for women and girls, particularly in vulnerable sectors like mining.



## United for Equality: ICGLR Member States Experts Quick Start a Gender, Peace and Security Barometer in the Great Lakes Region



In a fruitful seminar, delegates from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Member States convened for a pivotal workshop on monitoring the Regional Action Plan, implementing the **Women Peace and Security** agenda, and quick starting the **ICGLR Peace and Security Gender Barometer**. The event, which unfolded from November 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, marked a tangible step towards empowering women in conflict settings in the Great Lakes Region. Jointly organized by the ICGLR, the Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), the workshop brought together various and ideas and experiences.

The attendees from diverse backgrounds within the Great Lakes region included government officials, regional and civil society organizations, research institutions, and staunch advocates for women's rights. During the three-day forum, gender experts and statisticians, both representing member States shared invaluable insights from their journey of implementing national action plans based on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. A key focus was the development of a gender barometer, a tool set to revolutionize the way gender data informs policy and Ambassador Yasir Ibrahim Ali Mohammed, the



Deputy Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, in his opening address, emphasized the critical need for gender-disaggregated data management. He highlighted the various initiatives undertaken by the ICGLR Secretariat to foster gender equality and support the women, peace, and security agenda. These efforts include a Regional Action Plan aligned with UN Resolution 1325 and a comprehensive policy for gender mainstreaming, particularly in the mining sector.

Representatives from partner organizations also contributed significantly. The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region lauded the collaborative efforts in developing the gender barometer project. This initiative, facilitated



by the synergy of the ICGLR with its regional centers in Zambia and Uganda, the UNFPA, UN-WOMEN, COCAFEM, and CERED, is poised to be a robust mechanism for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of gender-related statistical data. Ambassador Xia emphasized that this endeavor is not only vital for achieving Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Great Lakes Region but also crucial for the effective implementation of the African Union Continental Results Framework for Women, Peace, and Security, adopted in 2018 as an instrument of accountability. Dr. Sabine Ntakarutimana, the President of the ICGLR Regional Women also emphasized that women who participate in peace processes tend to represent broader and more diverse constituencies, ensuring a range of views and interests are represented and peace processes are fully democratized.



During the workshop, participants reviewed the indicators informing the gender barometer focusing on peace and security. They organized the manners the data will be collected and validated. This exercise will facilitate easy access to data which will inform evidence based decisions and programming at different levels.

*ICGLR Member States are involved with their respective experts and statisticians in gender equality and the WPS agenda*



The workshop culminated with expressions of satisfaction from both participants and organizers, highlighting the exemplary contributions of all stakeholders. Ms. Néné Bah, the Senior Gender Adviser in the Office of the Special Envoy, reflected on the enthusiasm and commitment displayed by Member States' representatives, saying: "It was highly encouraging to see how Member States got involved with their respective experts and statisticians in gender equality and the WPS agenda." She underscored the importance of diligently collecting the agreed-upon data to make the gender barometer a success.

## The Democratic Republic of the Congo Hosts a Regional Forum on the Implementation of the ICGLR Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM) Gold Strategy



**Kinshasa, DR Congo, 15 September 2023** - The Regional Forum on the implementation of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Strategy for Artisanal and Small-Scale mining (ASM) Gold was held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), on 12-15 September 2023. The meeting brought together representatives from the ICGLR Member States, Government officials of ministries in charge of mining, experts from the gold sector, civil society representatives, members of the ICGLR Regional Private Sector Forum, and various other stakeholders. Guided by the Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and the Lusaka Declaration on the Fight against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, the participants underscored their commitment to address challenges relating to the illegal exploitation of artisanal gold in the DRC and the region.

Illegal exploitation and illicit trade in artisanal gold mining is a major concern in the Great Lakes region. This is due to the potential use of the illegally acquired artisanal gold for the financing of armed conflicts, which results in, among other things, mass

displacement of people and the violation of their fundamental human rights as well as the deprivation of both mining communities and governments from benefiting from this precious metal.

Since 2006, various efforts have been put in place to address these challenges, including the 2006 Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and the 2010 commitments of the Lusaka Declaration on the Fight against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. Since then, the ICGLR and its partners have consistently championed the cause of combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Great Lakes region. The strategy is implemented by Member States following the orientations of the ICGLR Regional Initiative on the Fight Against the Illegal Exploitation of natural Resources (RINR).

The ASM Gold Strategy, a comprehensive framework that outlines key initiatives and interventions to address the complex issue of artisanal gold trade, is one of the key approaches that have been developed to tackle the problem. The strategy seeks to establish sustainable and responsible artisanal gold



trade in the region. The strategy is implemented by Member States following the orientations of the ICGLR Regional Initiative on the Fight Against the Illegal Exploitation of natural Resources (RINR).

The Regional forum was, therefore, organized to disseminate and collaboratively formulate pragmatic recommendations for the effective implementation of the ICGLR ASM Gold Strategy across the Great Lakes region. One of the main objectives was to discuss modalities and strategies of developing a regional gold tracking system that promotes transparency and responsibility within the artisanal gold trade.

During the meeting, participants agreed on the formulation and validation of practical recommendations aimed at facilitating the dissemination and implementation of the strategy within each Member State of the ICGLR. Additionally, they agreed on commitments toward formalizing the artisanal gold supply chain, ensuring its transition from informal channels to legal pathways.

## Strengthening the MCVE's security skills in high-risk areas



As part of the European Union's support program for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Transition International and MONUSCO's Security Section jointly organised a training course aimed at building the capacity of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM). The course took place in Goma from 22-23 November 2023.

This initiative is specifically aimed at improving the safety and security of EJVM staff operating in high-risk areas, particularly in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Safety and Security in Difficult Field training course was carefully designed to prepare EJVM staff for the real-life challenges encountered during field missions in unstable environments.



A key component of the training was the simulation of authentic field situations, enabling participants to develop appropriate responses to the risks and dangers they may face. This practical approach reinforces their learning by confronting them with realistic scenarios, thereby improving their readiness for critical situations.

The training also placed particular emphasis on first aid skills in hostile environments. Staff were trained in first aid, a vital skill that can save lives in emergencies in the field.

The overall aim of this training was to increase participants' safety awareness by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to anticipate, prevent, and respond effectively to a variety of safety incidents that may arise during their missions.

This initiative demonstrates the EJVM's ongoing commitment to enhancing the safety of its staff and improving their ability to conduct missions in complex, high-risk environments. This will help to ensure safer and more efficient operations, thereby ensuring the sustainability and success of the EJVM's activities in the Great Lakes Region.





## ICGLR Secretariat hosts Induction for National Coordinators to Boost Regional Cooperation



The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) recently organized a two-day induction workshop in Bujumbura, Burundi, to strengthen the performance of its National Coordination Mechanisms (NCMs). The event, which took place from 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023, was attended by over 50 participants, including National Coordinators, ICGLR Secretariat officials, and development partners.

The main objective of the workshop was to address the high turnover rate of National Coordinators by providing comprehensive orientation on their mandate per the ICGLR Pact and sharing experiences for better coordination. The meeting also aimed to obtain inputs into the new Strategic Plan 2022–2026 and provide recommendations to bolster NCM capacities.

During the workshop, participants engaged in various areas of discussion, such as the historical context, priority protocols, organizational structure, strategic priorities, role of coordination mechanisms, and monitoring & reporting frameworks. The sessions also focused on the linkages between national and regional priorities and managing priorities outlined in the new five-year ICGLR Strategic Plan.

*The pivotal role of National Coordinators is to facilitate Pact implementation and link regional and national operations.*



**Amb. João Samuel Caholo, ICGLR Executive Secretary**, emphasized the pivotal role of National Coordinators in facilitating Pact implementation and linking regional and national operations during the opening session. Amb. Caholo expressed confidence that the workshop would help induct new coordinators, enable peer learning, and ultimately enhance ownership of the ICGLR agenda.



One of the most engaging sessions was a presentation by **former National Coordinator of Burundi, Amb. Gaspard Kabura**. Participants gained valuable advice on overcoming common challenges around capacities, reporting, resources, and government support based on his insider experiences.

The workshop contributed to reinvigorating regional ties and outlining recommendations like guidelines and partnerships for National Coordination Mechanisms to function optimally as implementers and coordinators of the collective regional drive towards peace, good governance, and development. As the ICGLR embarks on operationalizing its 2022-2026 Strategy, the strengthened NCM coordination resulting from the workshop will accelerate tackling root causes of conflict and boost economic growth in the region.





## Women Peacebuilders Gain New Skills to Resolve Conflict



In recent times, women have become increasingly involved in the quest for peace and stability across the world. Members of the steering committee for the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum recently took part in a two-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, focused on building their capacities for mediation and constructive conflict resolution.

The training program, hosted from 1st -2nd December 2023, equipped participants with critical skills on principled negotiation, dialogic engagement, conflict analysis, and related themes. Through interactive sessions facilitated by expert peacebuilding practitioner Mr. Philip Visser of ACCORD, the group explored regional case studies and practiced applying tools tailored to their context.

Addressing the workshop, the Director for Gender, Women and Children, Ms. Flaviana Charles Mayuta, highlighted the importance of the skills development. The training directly responds to the recognized need for women's inclusion and leadership in mediation processes across the Great Lakes region.





In her opening remarks, the President of the Forum Hon. Dr. Sabine Ntakarutimana, thanked ACCORD and the Secretariat for their support but noted the lack of resources to implement the Forum's ambitious strategic plans for women's engagement in peace and security. She called upon additional partners to provide assistance in resourcing and coordinating with complementary networks.

By exchanging wisdom from women peacebuilders across Africa and emphasizing practical application to current disputes, the workshop succeeded in bolstering members' confidence and readiness to pursue concrete actions centred on mediation, community facilitation, and stakeholder engagement around flashpoint issues in their countries.

Women have always been the backbone of their communities, and their inclusion in peacebuilding processes is essential for the success of any initiative. The training program provided a platform for women to exchange ideas, learn new skills, and enhance their capabilities to resolve conflicts in their communities.





## ICGLR Chiefs of Defence Staff and Ministers of Defence Convene and Discuss Regional Security



The meetings of ICGLR Chiefs of Defence Staff and Ministers of Defence convened in Luanda from 5th – 7th July 2023 in Luanda to discuss regional security. The meetings brought together top military officials and policymakers from countries in the Great Lakes region to tackle the complex security challenges the region is facing.

The Chiefs of Defence Forces/Staff from the member states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) met on 5th July 2023 to assess the security situation across the region. The meeting aimed to encourage better cooperation and strengthen security ties.

The forum provided an opportunity for the Chiefs of Defence Staff to discuss the state of security in the region and exchange ideas on how to tackle emerging challenges. At the opening ceremony of the meeting, Angola's Secretary of State for Veterans and Veterans of the Homeland, General (ret.) Domingos André Tchikanha emphasized that "peace and national reconciliation are the greatest

assets for us to safely develop our life projects, whether personal, family, institutional or state." He reiterated Angola's commitment to demonstrating leadership for stability in Africa, especially within ICGLR.



Echoing a similar sentiment, Angolan Chief of Defence Staff General Altino dos Santos said the conference presented an opportune time for open discussion on pressing security challenges facing ICGLR members. He noted that regional peace and stability are necessary conditions for advancing citizen welfare.

The meeting served as a precursor to the ICGLR Ministers' of Defence meeting held on 7th July 2023, whose agenda was to deliberate on the various security challenges facing the Great Lakes region, including terrorism and armed conflicts.

The Minister of National Defence and Veterans of the Homeland, General João Ernesto dos Santos, "Liberdade," from the Republic of Angola, and regional Defence Ministers emphasized the need for increased dialogue to resolve ongoing conflicts in the Great Lakes Region.

Minister Liberdade urged ICGLR members to prioritize dialogue and negotiation as the preferred models for settling disputes. He urged members to demonstrate their commitment to peaceful ideals endorsed at bilateral and multilateral forums through concrete actions.

The ICGLR Executive Secretary, Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, emphasized the urgency of the situation and the need to enhance information exchange between ICGLR member states' defence and security forces. Enhanced cooperation aims to foster enduring peace and stability vital for improving living conditions for local populations.



These high-profile assemblies of military leadership highlight ICGLR's mandate to promote sustainable peace by addressing defence and security issues affecting the Great Lakes community.



# Strengthening Electoral Security in the Great Lakes Region: Insights from the Pivotal Goma Workshop



The nexus between electoral processes and security holds paramount significance, especially in regions grappling with crises. In line with this imperative, a workshop titled “Security and Elections in Times of Crisis: Issues and Challenges” took place from December 5th to 7th, 2023, in Goma, DRC. This event held pivotal importance, not only for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) but also for the broader Great Lakes Region.

This workshop, organized through a collaboration between the European Union (EU) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), endeavors to convene key stakeholders of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM). Its primary focus lies in addressing challenges linked to elections in the DRC and evaluating potential risks of violence. The EJVM, established in 2012 in Goma, brings together military experts from the 12 ICGLR Member States alongside observers from regional and international organizations.

At the heart of the EJVM’s mandate is the monitoring, verification, and reporting of the security landscape along the DRC’s borders, particularly in the Kivu and



Ituri provinces. In a climate marked by heightened security concerns, this workshop assumes critical significance in strengthening the analytical capacities of EJVM’s experts.

Over three days, the experts delved into diverse facets encompassing understanding the electoral



process, delineating the role of security forces, and efficaciously pre-empting electoral violence. Emphasis was also laid on cross-border threats and devising strategies to counter them throughout the electoral trajectory. The primary objective was to equip participants with indispensable tools and insights to avert violence and ensure stability, notably during the December 2023 elections in the DRC.

This workshop stood as an unparalleled opportunity to augment the knowledge and proficiencies of individuals engaged in electoral security. It served as a collaborative platform fostering exchange, aiming to collectively address common challenges and pave the way for peaceful and democratic elections in the Great Lakes Region.





## Private Sector Meeting in Lusaka to Support Economic Development and Regional Integration in Great Lakes Region



The Private Sector Forum (PSF) held its General Assembly on 16th and 17th November 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia. The assembly brought together stakeholders to discuss economic development, regional integration, and the implementation of the PACT of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The primary focus was to evaluate the PSF's role in fostering economic development and regional integration and receive updates from member states on the implementation of the ICGLR Pact in relation to economic and development aspects.

Approximately fifty participants attended the event, with representation from each ICGLR Member State. Invitations were also extended to the ICGLR National Coordination Mechanism, the Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, and nominated representatives of ICGLR Fora, among others.

One of the key topics of discussion was the draft PSF Strategic Plan (2023-2027) and its accompanying Action Plan. The assembly focused on finding ways to effectively implement the strategies outlined in



*ICGLR Deputy Executive Secretary, Amb Yasir Ibrahim Ali Mohammed*



the plan and address the challenges and opportunities faced by the PSF within the Great Lakes Region. The meeting also encouraged the sharing of best practices in managing the Secretariat and fostering collaboration with national governments and the ICGLR Conference Secretariat.

At the end of the general assembly, an effective and dynamic ICGLR PSF Committee was formed, and a clear roadmap for engagements within the Forum and with the Conference Secretariat was established. The assembly committed to mobilizing resources to support PSF initiatives, paving the way for Strengthening the Role of PSF in Security, Stability, and Development Implementation

The meeting resulted in the creation of practical strategies and encouraged partnerships to enhance the private sector's role in promoting socio-economic growth and stability throughout the Great Lakes Region. This is a significant advancement towards fostering economic development and integration across the region.





## ICGLR Receives Equipment and Vehicle to Strengthen Institutional Capacity



The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has received a significant boost to its institutional capacity thanks to the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ). The contribution of IT equipment and a vehicle was officially presented during a ceremony held on 12th December 2023, which was attended by high-ranking officials, including the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Burundi, H.E. Carsten Hölscher, and the Deputy Head of Mission/ Head of Development Cooperation, Netherlands Embassy in Burundi, Mr. Ted Hunink. The ICGLR Executive Secretary, Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, Ambassador Yasir Ibrahim Ali Mohammed, and officials from the ICGLR and GIZ were also present at the event.

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The Executive Secretary described the ceremony as “not just the delivery of equipment but the strengthening of a partnership” between the institutions. He reinforced the ICGLR’s commitment to continued close collaboration with GIZ, the Netherlands, Germany and other partners towards the shared objectives of stability and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region.

*Strengthening Partnerships: ICGLR and GIZ Collaboration Goes Beyond Equipment Delivery*

This partnership between the ICGLR, Germany, and the Netherlands is crucial to progress and prosperity across the region. With this handover, the ICGLR is now better equipped to deliver on its mandate of promoting peace, security, and responsible natural resource governance in the Great Lakes region. It is envisaged that this partnership will continue to thrive and yield positive results for the region’s inhabitants.





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