

# Newsletter

DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE



## The 18th Ordinary Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC) Addresses Peace and Security Challenges

The ICGLR held its 18th Ordinary Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC) in Luanda, Angola, on November 24, 2024. The meeting brought together Foreign Affairs Ministers from ten member states to assess regional security and humanitarian challenges.

In his opening remarks, ICGLR Executive Secretary Ambassador João Samuel Caholo highlighted both progress and ongoing challenges in the region. He expressed concern over persistent security challenges, particularly the ongoing conflict in Sudan and instability in eastern DRC.

United Nations Special Envoy Huang Xia and the African Union High Representative were high-level officials who addressed the opening ceremony. The UN Special Envoy

reinforced the UN's commitment to regional stability, highlighting ongoing collaboration in tackling illegal mineral exploitation. He particularly emphasized the need for sustained diplomatic engagement through the Addis Ababa Peace Framework.

African Union High Representative Sghair M'Bareck Said presented a severe humanitarian challenge facing the region, noting that Sudan faces a crisis with 20 million displaced persons while Eastern DRC continues to struggle with over 6 million internally displaced persons.

RIMC Chairperson H.E. Ambassador Tête António announced a significant diplomatic initiative: Angola's President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço has formally requested the African Union to recognize ICGLR as

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a regional mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution. This move aims to strengthen the organization's capacity to address regional security challenges.

During the session, the Chairpersons of the Regional Multifunctional Youth Forum and the Acting Secretary General of the Forum of Parliaments addressed the RIMC, presenting their activities and outlining the challenges faced by their respective forums.

The Youth Forum highlighted positive developments, including plans for Nairobi's ICGLR Regional Youth Forum Secretariat. However, they raised concerns about the region's 60% youth unemployment rate, emphasizing the need for economic opportunities. The Forum acknowledged ongoing support from various partners, including the European Union, Institute for Security Studies, ACCORD, African Union, UNFPA, and the UN Office of the Special Envoy. The Forum of Parliaments reported on its enhanced engagement with civil society organizations and

governments, demonstrating ICGLR's commitment to inclusive approaches to regional challenges.

The RIMC also received and reviewed reports from various ministerial committees. The Committee of Ministers of Defence presented their assessment of the regional security situation, while the Ministers in charge of Mines reported on efforts to combat the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Reports were also received from the Ministers in charge of Youth and the Ministers in charge of Gender on progress in implementing gender-related programs.

The deliberations underscored the interconnected nature of peace, security, and development in the Great Lakes Region. With clear recommendations from various ministerial committees and renewed commitments to regional cooperation, the RIMC concluded its 18th session.



Secrétariat de la Conférence Internationale sur la Région des Grands Lacs

Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

#### Vision

The Conference Secretariat (CS) is an efficient and effective institution and the focal point coordinating the implementation of the Pact and other related initiatives of Member States and other stakeholders.

Nous sommes une institution efficiente et efficace et le point focal coordonnant la mise en œuvre du Pacte et autres initiatives y relatives des pays membres et des autres parties prenantes.

#### Mission

To be an effective and dynamic institution which *Coordinates, Facilitates, Monitors* and *Ensures* the implementation of the Pact and other initiatives, in order to attain peace, security, stability and development in the Great Lakes Region.

La mission du Secrétariat est d'être une institution efficace et dynamique qui *Coordonne, Facilite* et *Assure la promotion et le suivi* de la mise en œuvre du Pacte et autres initiatives en vue d'aboutir à la paix, la sécurité, la stabilité et le développement dans la Région des Grands Lacs.





## The ICGLR Executive Secretary Highlights Regional Mechanisms' Role at Antalya Diplomacy Forum 2024



The Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), H.E. João Samuel Caholo, participated in the prestigious Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) 2024, held from March 1-3 in Antalya, Turkey. The event convened high-level officials, policymakers, academics, and civil society representatives from around the globe to discuss critical global and regional issues under the theme “Advancing Diplomacy in Times of Turmoil.”

H.E. Caholo contributed to a panel discussion titled “The Role of Regional Mechanisms,” sharing insights into ICGLR’s extensive experience in fostering peace, security, and development across its 12 Member States.

View the full panel discussion here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd6331YL9es>.

During his intervention, the Executive Secretary emphasized that peacebuilding is mandatory in addressing complex, cross-border challenges that often elude unilateral solutions: “If the Great Lakes region of the ICGLR were at peace, it could contribute positively to ensuring sustainable development for all humankind”.

The Luanda Roadmap offers a political and military framework to establish peace and stability in eastern DR Congo. Meanwhile, the Nairobi Roadmap, under the aegis of the EAC, serves as a political mediation process.

“The international community must collaborate and harmonize efforts to ensure that the armed groups operating in the Great Lakes region join the two platforms to voice their grievances”, H.E. Caholo stated. He underscored the need for robust international partnerships, capacity building, and enhanced diplomacy to amplify the impact of regional organizations.

The Antalya Diplomacy Forum provided a vital platform for the ICGLR to showcase its successes and exchange ideas with other global stakeholders on tackling emerging challenges such as climate change, migration, and digital transformation. H.E. Caholo also called for greater investment in regional peacebuilding mechanisms to prevent conflicts and foster resilience.

The ICGLR Secretariat continues to strengthen its collaborations with other regional and international organizations to align its agenda with global priorities for sustainable development.



## ICGLR Member States Ambassadors Gather in Bujumbura to Address Regional Security and Humanitarian Challenges

On the 17th of September, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) hosted a high-level meeting with ambassadors representing Member States and the ICGLR Group of Friends. This significant gathering underscored the commitment of the diplomatic community to address pressing regional challenges collaboratively.

The meeting was graced by the presence of H.E. Maj. Gen. (Rtd) Matayo Kyaligonza, Uganda's Ambassador to Burundi and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, alongside ambassadors from Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ambassador Bernard Ntahiraja, the ICGLR National Coordinator, represented the Republic of Burundi, while South Africa participated as a key member of the ICGLR Group of Friends.

Discussions centered on critical political, security, and humanitarian issues affecting the Great Lakes Region. Participants explored ways to enhance cooperation and develop sustainable solutions to ongoing challenges, reaffirming their shared commitment to regional stability and development.

The ICGLR Secretariat expressed gratitude to all participants for their active engagement and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration among Member States and international partners. By fostering dialogue and coordinated action, the ICGLR and its stakeholders aim to strengthen the region's resilience and promote lasting peace.

The outcomes of this meeting pave the way for further engagements and initiatives, demonstrating the ICGLR's dedication to addressing the region's most pressing concerns effectively.





## The Executive Secretary's working visit to the Republic of Kenya

The Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, conducted a two-day working visit to Kenya from 2nd to 3rd September 2024 to strengthen regional cooperation initiatives. During his visit, he held strategic consultations with senior government officials, religious leaders, and representatives from the mining sector, focusing on peace and security, regional development, and enhanced collaboration across the Great Lakes Region.

Ambassador Caholo's engagement with Hon. Charles Keter, Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, with discussions centring on the security and political landscape, particularly regarding situations in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. The dialogue extended to productive meetings with representatives from the Office of the Facilitator of the EAC-Led Nairobi Process, including Mr. George Kariuki and Brigadier (Rtd) Elijah Mwasi Mwanyika, where they explored strategies to unify various peace processes in the region.



At Kenya's State Department for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Caholo met with senior diplomats Ambassador Lucy Kiruthu, Deputy Director General for Political and Diplomatic Affairs, and Ambassador Denis Mburu, Deputy Director General for African Affairs. The Executive Secretary acknowledged Kenya's distinctive status as the sole Member State maintaining a resident Permanent Representative to the ICGLR, highlighting the country's deep commitment to regional cooperation. Their discussions advanced plans for the Regional Youth Forum Secretariat and the





upcoming Mining and Investment Conference.

The religious dimension of regional peace-building took centre stage during Ambassador Caholo's meeting with Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki, General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The meeting was attended by Kenya's ICGLR National Coordinator, Mr. James Kiiru, who focused on reinvigorating their existing Memorandum of Understanding. The discussions emphasized the critical role of faith-based organizations in grassroots community engagement and explored possibilities for joint social reconstruction programs in conflict-affected areas.

In a significant step toward economic

cooperation, Ambassador Caholo engaged with Mr. Elijah Mwangi, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Mining, Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs. Their discussions centred on the Great Lakes Mining and Investment Conference and explored Kenya's potential participation in the Regional Certification Mechanism, designed to combat the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The meeting highlighted Kenya's progress in developing its mining sector, including plans for an internationally recognized gold mine. Ambassador Caholo's engagements underscored ICGLR's commitment to fostering multilateral cooperation across diplomatic, religious, and economic sectors. Through these strategic meetings, the visit reinforced Kenya's pivotal role in

regional peace initiatives while establishing concrete pathways for enhanced collaboration in addressing the complex challenges facing the Great Lakes Region.



## High-Level Regional Women’s Forum Advances Peace Initiatives in Great Lakes Region

The Conference Secretariat participated in the High-Level Regional Women’s Forum hosted by the Republic of Burundi in Bujumbura on 22-23 August 2024. The forum, held under the theme “Promoting the regional agenda for peace, security and economic cooperation through participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery,” was co-organized by the guarantors of the Peace and Security Framework for the DRC and the region - the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), African Union, SADC, and the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, with support from GIZ. H.E. Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi and current Chairperson of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC (PSC) and the Region, opened the forum by emphasizing the indispensable role of women in conflict prevention and resolution.

The ICGLR delegation was led by Executive Secretary Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, who emphasized the organization’s commitment to implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. “As we gather here in Bujumbura, we stand at a significant crossroads in the history of our region,” he noted, highlighting how regional conflicts have disproportionately affected women and girls while outlining concrete initiatives planned for 2024-2026.

The representative of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy



for the Great Lakes Region, Ms. Fatou Thiam, commended the resilience of regional women who “work tirelessly on the ground, rebuilding war-torn communities, facilitating ongoing political mediations, and defending the rights of the most vulnerable.”

The forum benefited from the participation of Ms. Julienne

Lusenge, renowned human rights activist, 2023 UN Human Rights Prize winner, and dedicated advocate for survivors of wartime sexual violence. As Deputy Coordinator of the National Oversight Mechanism of the PSC Framework, Ms. Lusenge shared valuable insights from recent peace initiatives, including the women’s mission to Angola. Her participation





particularly enriched discussions on strengthening women's roles in ongoing regional peace processes.

The forum also benefited from the insights of Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, the first Executive Secretary of ICGLR and a current member of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Advisory Board.

Throughout the two-day forum, participants emphasized that while women have been victims of conflict, they have proven themselves to be an unstoppable force for peace. A powerful message resonated through the discussions: "When women rise up for peace, peace follows." Participants stressed the urgent need to approach regional peace-building differently, calling for innovative strategies and increased meaningful participation of women in all peace processes.

The forum featured several expert panels and technical sessions. A significant focus was placed on combating conflict-related sexual violence, with recommendations including strengthening support for one-stop centres across the region, promoting positive masculinity programs, and building stronger partnerships with local leaders. Dr. Janviere Ndirahisha, the Regional Director of the Regional Training Facility (RTF) emphasized the importance of revitalizing the Kampala Declaration as a crucial framework for addressing gender-based violence in the Great Lakes Region.

A major development announced during the forum was the launch of a Gender Barometer for the Great Lakes region by the ICGLR, which was developed in partnership with UNFPA and the Office of the UN Special Envoy. This initiative aims



*Ms. Julienne Lusenge*



to strengthen data management and assessment of gender equality situations across the region.

The forum concluded with the adoption of a roadmap for action, emphasizing the transformation of policy commitments into tangible improvements in women's lives across the region. This forum marked a significant step forward in strengthening women's meaningful participation in peace and security initiatives in the Great Lakes Region.







## ICGLR Restructuring Agenda at Nairobi Workshop

The Conference Secretariat organized a three-day restructuring workshop from 9-11 July 2024, at the Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop, supported by the German Development Cooperation (GIZ), brought together National Coordinators, ICGLR Secretariat staff, and representatives from various decentralized organs to shape the organization’s future direction.

Executive Secretary Ambassador João Samuel Caholo emphasized the workshop’s significance in shaping ICGLR’s future. He highlighted the ongoing implementation of recommendations from the 2019 Ernst & Young report while stressing that the restructuring aims to create an optimal staffing structure for effectively implementing the ICGLR mandate. “This is about enhancing our organization’s capacity to serve



**This is about enhancing our organization’s capacity to serve Member States and address regional challenges more effectively.**

Member States and address regional challenges more effectively.”

Ambassador Dennis Gathogo Mburu, representing Kenya’s Principal Secretary for Foreign Affairs, highlighted the need to review ICGLR’s achievements over its 20-year history and address current regional and global challenges. He particularly emphasized the importance of financial sustainability and proposed exploring synergistic strategies with other regional bodies. The workshop identified several essential areas for restructuring. Plans include streamlining the

top-heavy structure and reducing the number of directorates while strengthening technical staffing. Financial sustainability emerged as a key focus, with plans to develop an effective fund mobilization strategy and enhanced mechanisms for ensuring timely Member State contributions.

Operational improvements will focus on improving coordination between Member States and the ICGLR Secretariat, including better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The restructuring initiative represents a significant milestone in ICGLR’s evolution, reflecting the organization’s commitment to adapting to emerging regional challenges while maintaining its core mission of fostering peace, security, and development in the Great Lakes Region.



## ICGLR Strengthens Regional Peace Efforts Through MOU with All Africa Conference of Churches



The Conference Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) on 14th March 2024. The agreement, signed at the AACC offices by ICGLR Executive Secretary Ambassador João Samuel Caholo and AACC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki, establishes a framework for collaboration between the two organizations.

The partnership focuses on significant areas affecting the Great Lakes Region, including peace and reconciliation, democracy and good governance, sustainable development, and economic stewardship. Special attention will be given to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, women's empowerment, youth development, climate change, and ecological stewardship.

In his address during the signing ceremony, Ambassador Caholo

highlighted the strategic importance of partnering with faith-based organizations, noting their unique position in mobilizing citizens and advocating for positive change. "Faith-based organizations play a critical role in reaching grassroots communities and can contribute significantly to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in our region," he emphasized.

Rev. Dr. Mwombeki reaffirmed AACC's dedication to addressing regional challenges, emphasizing the importance of combining both organizations' strengths and resources to achieve their shared peace and development objectives in the Great Lakes Region.

The MOU outlines several practical areas of cooperation, including joint advocacy initiatives and events, while also establishing mechanisms for pursuing funding opportunities to support collaborative projects. This



**Faith-based organizations play a critical role in reaching grassroots communities and can contribute significantly to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in our region,"**



partnership represents a significant step forward in regional efforts to promote peace, security, and sustainable development through inclusive approaches that engage both institutional and faith-based actors.

Both organizations will now move forward with implementing agreed-upon activities, leveraging their respective strengths to contribute to a more stable and prosperous Great Lakes Region.



# Strengthening Conflict Prevention: ICGLR’s Drive for a Robust Early Warning and Response System

The ICGLR hosted an important workshop in Nairobi, from 28-29 October 2024, aimed at enhancing our ability to prevent and resolve conflicts in the Great Lakes region. Supported by the Delegation of the European Union in Burundi, and in partnership with The Institute for Security Studies Africa (ISS Africa), the workshop focuses on developing a robust Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) to tackle security challenges across the region.

In his remarks, the ICGLR Executive Secretary stressed the importance of translating early warnings into preparedness and action to save lives. The ICGLR aims to build a system based on solid foundations to foster trust in information sharing and management.

This workshop provided a platform for experts and stakeholders to refine strategies for early warning and early response. By collectively addressing these challenges head-on, the initiative aimed to foster a safer and more stable region.

According to the EU Ambassador to Burundi, Ambassador Pietrobon Elisabetta: “We must say that the ICGLR and its Decentralized Organs and especially the implementation of an Early warning system won’t succeed without a political will, without a concrete commitment of ICGLR members States to support the Secretariat in its mandate, including on this important project. I

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Effective early warning systems have been recognised as prudent investments, and when coupled with early preparedness for early response, they help mitigate conflict and increase stability.

Ambassador João Samuel Caholo  
ICGLR Executive Secretary

hope the upcoming very high-level meetings in November will be the opportunity for member States to make that commitment”.



Enhancing the ICGLR’s capabilities through the establishment of a robust early warning system, which is informed by evidence-based decisions, supported by technical and capacity-building initiatives is key to designing an early warning system fit to address the peace and security challenges in the Great Lakes Region, concluded Dr Paul-Simon Handy ISS Africa Regional Director.





## Harmonized Regional Approach: Uniting for Mineral Value Addition and Cross-Border Trade in the Great Lakes Region



The forum emphasized the need for ICGLR Member States to go beyond raw material exports and embrace value addition as a strategy for regional socio-economic growth. Participants identified key issues hampering the region's mining sector, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and a lack of research and development in modern mining practices. These challenges limit job creation and economic opportunities for local communities, especially youth and women. A harmonized approach to value addition, focusing on refining, processing, and utilizing mineral resources within the region, is seen as a solution that can unlock the full





potential of the Great Lakes' mineral wealth.

### Highlights of Key Recommendations

The forum produced a series of actionable recommendations aimed at transforming the region's mining landscape:

#### 1. Enhanced Regional Cooperation for Infrastructure and Trade

Member States are encouraged to develop robust infrastructure, including reliable energy solutions and improved transportation networks, to create a conducive environment for local and foreign investments. To overcome barriers to cross-border trade, delegates urged for intergovernmental dialogues and joint projects that promote value addition across the region, helping Member States to prioritize collaborative rather than competitive trade approaches.

#### 2. Strengthening Research and Innovation in Mining

Participants underscored the need for collaboration between governments, local universities, and private sector players to advance research and technological development. Establishing innovation hubs and funding joint R&D initiatives would foster cutting-edge solutions, enabling the region to compete in global markets.

#### 3. Access to Finance for Local Enterprises

Ensuring local mining enterprises have access to finance was highlighted as a crucial measure to boost local markets. Establishing guarantee funds and removing intermediaries in the supply chain were proposed to empower local businesses and increase profitability

by capturing more value within the region.

#### 4. Empowering Women and Youth

Recognizing the untapped potential of women and young people in the mining sector, the forum recommended promoting their involvement in the sector through cooperatives and associations. Encouraging these groups to view mining as a viable business opportunity rather than subsistence work is key to sustainable economic empowerment.

#### 5. Improving Policy and Regulatory Frameworks

Harmonized policies that attract investment and encourage value addition were identified as fundamental to the region's success. The forum called on governments to implement flexible trade policies, provide tax incentives, and create favorable conditions that appeal to investors while supporting local content and sustainable development.

#### A Regional Vision for the Future

The ICGLR Regional Guidelines on Mineral Value Addition and Cross-Border Trade, reviewed during the forum, represent a blueprint for future action. By fostering a shared vision across Member States, the guidelines aim to drive competitive regional value chains and ensure that the economic benefits of mineral wealth extend to local communities. The collaboration exhibited in Juba signals a strong commitment to transforming the Great Lakes Region into a hub for responsibly mined and processed minerals, setting the stage for a brighter economic future.

Forging a Sustainable Future: Great Lakes Region Sets Path for Responsible Mineral Resource Management

The Regional Forum on Mineral Value Addition and Cross-Border Trade closed with a renewed sense of purpose among participants. Through these strategic recommendations, ICGLR Member States are poised to harness their mineral wealth sustainably, promote peace and stability, and enhance regional development. With continued cooperation and investment, the Great Lakes Region is on a promising path toward becoming a leading example of responsible and profitable mineral resource management.



## The ICGLR Convened the 25th Meeting of the Regional Audit Committee in Juba to Sustain Mineral Resource

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) conducted its 25th Audit Committee meeting in Juba, South Sudan, marking significant strides toward improved mineral resource governance. Held from October 30 to November 1, 2024, this pivotal event convened key regional stakeholders, including members of the ICGLR Audit Committee, staff from South Sudan’s Ministry of Mining and ICGLR’s National Coordination Mechanism, ICGLR Secretariat staff, and ICGLR partners supporting the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR).

### Strengthening Regional Commitment

South Sudan’s Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Mining, Eng. James Yousif Kundu, opened the session, commending ICGLR’s dedication to sustainable resource management and highlighting South Sudan’s commitment to align with the ICGLR Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM). The Representative of the ICGLR National Coordinator Amb. Juma Dino Amoi further emphasized the significance of this meeting, marking the first ICGLR event in Juba since South Sudan joined in 2013. Both leaders praised the logistical support that ensured the meeting’s success.



Mr. Philip Kiplangat Kirui, Regional Audit Committee Chair



Mr Eduard Simukonda, Audit Committee Vice Chair



Mrs Immaculée Nyiranzirorera , Audit Committee member/Rwanda

### Key Milestones Achieved

- Approval of RCM Revision Tool: A new tool was endorsed to streamline submission of proposals for modification of RCM standards and clauses geared to enhance certification processes across Member States.
- Launch of RCM Audit Methodology Revision: A six-month review period was set to refine regional audit standards.
- Finalization of the Corrective Action Plans: Developed to address findings of third-party audit reports in the DRC, specifically in South Kivu and Haut Uele.
- Pre-accreditation of Third-Party Auditors: Enhancing the region’s pool of qualified auditors for future exporters’ supply chain assessment.

The ICGLR Audit Committee’s work strengthens the Great Lakes Region’s path to peace and economic integration. ICGLR Audit Committee Vice-Chair Edward Simukonda stressed the need for high-quality audits and transparent reporting. The ICGLR Secretariat expressed gratitude to the Government of South Sudan for its warm hospitality and commitment to regional stability.

This meeting’s outcomes reaffirm ICGLR’s dedication to stimulating sustainable development and economic prosperity in the mining sector across the Great Lakes Region, building a future free from the destabilizing effects of illegal mineral exploitation.



## Combatting Illegal Resource Exploitation: Key Discussions from the 29th ICGLR Regional Committee Meeting in Juba

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) successfully held the 29th Regional Committee Meeting in Juba, South Sudan, from 4 to 5 November 2024. This pivotal gathering brought together ICGLR the Committee members to assess ongoing activities and chart the way forward in implementing the organization's regional peace and development agenda.

Dr. Cosmos Pitia Kujjo, Undersecretary at the South Sudan Ministry of Mining, opened the meeting with a message of hope and determination: "I hope these meetings will catalyze the upcoming forum," he remarked, referring to the Regional Forum on Mineral Value Addition in ICGLR Member States..



*Dr. Cosmos Pitia Kujjo, Undersecretary at the South Sudan Ministry of Mining*

Representing the ICGLR Executive Secretary, Ms. Scholastica Mwau emphasized how crucial it is for ICGLR Member States to work together. With confidence in the power of unity, she assured attendees that this combined effort is key to achieving real impact.



*Ms Scholastica Mwau, ICGLR ES Representative*

Ambassador Juma Dimo Amoi, representing South Sudan's ICGLR National Coordinator, extended a heartfelt welcome to the attendees. He took a moment to acknowledge the ICGLR's partners, whose generous financial support made this gathering possible.



*Ambassador Juma Dimo Amoi, ICGLR National Coordinator for South Sudan Representative*

The Chair of the ICGLR Regional Committee, Ir. Estanislau Buio, guided participants through the meeting's agenda. Key topics included reviewing progress made since the last session and discussing the national roadmaps being implemented across Member States to address illegal resource

exploitation and ensure sustainable governance of natural resources.



*Estanislau Buio, Regional Committee Chair*

The ICGLR Regional Committee against the illegal exploitation of natural resources derives its authority from the ICGLR protocol against the illegal exploitation of natural resources. It convenes at least twice a year under the leadership of the Chair.

The ICGLR Technical Unit under the Programme on Democracy and Good Governance oversees the implementation of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, demonstrating the Committee's commitment to combating illegal activities and fostering sustainable governance over natural resources within the Great Lakes Region. Through this dedicated unit, the ICGLR seeks to strengthen oversight and encourage responsible practices that support regional stability and prosperity.



*Dr Emmanuel Makumba Mali, Democracy and Good Governance Program Director/ICGLR*







## The Six tools of the ICGLR's Regional Initiative against Illegal exploitation as key allies in boosting mineral trust in the Great Lakes Region



Following the signing of the Lusaka Declaration at the Special Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2010, Member States have committed themselves to harmonizing and coordinating policies for the protection and rational management of natural resources in the region.

The Great Lakes region is a frequently cited example of the paradox of abundance. It has a substantial quantity of natural resources coveted on the world market, such as lithium, cobalt and the 3TGS (tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold). The rate of informality in the ICGLR MS is very high in all minerals and reaches more than 90% and The ASM Subsector involves 5 million people in the 12 member states of the ICGLR, and over 30 million depend on it.

However, minerals from the Great Lakes region have long suffered from the distrust of companies and traders listed on international stock exchanges, who have tacitly suspended supplies to avoid being indexed. Moreover, the supply chains of the above-mentioned minerals remain complex and opaque. They are often concentrated in the Great Lakes region, where instability and cyclical conflicts exist as His Excellency Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, stated during 17th Annual Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains.

In response to this persistent challenge of socio-economic inequality and the trade in conflict minerals, the ICGLR has developed a global approach to stop the exploitation of natural resources: the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR). The RINR is made up of six tools namely, Regional Certification Mechanism, Harmonization of



National Legislations, Regional Database on Mineral Flows, Formalization of Artisanal Mining Sector, Extractive Initiative Transparency Initiative, and Whistleblowing Mechanism.

Being at the core of the Initiative, the ICGLR Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) focuses on four minerals namely tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold (3TGs) referred to as “Designated Minerals” under the ICGLR mineral certification scheme.

Five Member states namely, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Uganda, the united Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are already implementing the ICGLR RCM. It aims to ensure that mineral supply chains do not provide, direct or indirect support to non-state armed groups or security forces engaged in illegal activities and/or serious human rights abuses within and between ICGLR Member States in order to eliminate support for armed groups that perpetuate or prolong conflicts and/or commit serious human rights abuses.

As Mrs. Yvette Mwamba Mwanza, a successful mineral exporter in the DRC who has implemented the RCM, points out, its implementation helped to boost the confidence of mineral exporters with traders and importing countries.

In her view, the RCM has enabled her company KIVU MINERAL RESOURCES SARL to improve its internal governance, with particular emphasis on strengthening control and transparency of the chain of custody in interaction with all stakeholders. This improvement is reflected in the alignment of procedures with management requirements, respect for human rights and gender mainstreaming, which has had a positive impact on the company’s business operations and competitiveness.

As a reference, the RCM has given legitimacy to the supply chains of countries in the Great Lakes Region, thanks to its standard, which has won broad consensus at regional and international level, and with allies such as the UN and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

To ensure that the requirements of the Regional Initiative are implemented, article 25 of the Protocol defines the mission of the Regional Committee against the Exploitation of Natural Resources, which is to ensure and steer the effective implementation of the Protocol and the Regional Initiative in Member States.



## Empowering Change: Gitega Workshop Champions the Fight Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence



A three-day workshop aimed at strengthening the capacities of professionals working in recovery centres for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) has successfully concluded. Held from June 4 to 6, 2024, in Gitega, the workshop has resulted in a comprehensive action plan to guide future efforts in combating SGBV within the Republic of Burundi.

Organized by the ICGLR - Regional Training Facility (RTF) on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, in collaboration with the Burundian Ministry of National Solidarity, this workshop brought together 45 professionals from various centers across Burundi. The participants

included psychologists, legal experts, medical professionals, and social workers.

### Commitment to Eradicate SGBV

The workshop focused on the collective determination of ICGLR Member States to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence. Mrs. Donatienne Girukwishaka, Director General for the Promotion of Women and Gender Equality at the Ministry of National Solidarity of the Republic of Burundi, emphasized the critical role of comprehensive care for SGBV survivors.

The opening session was graced by the presence of Ambassador Bernard Ntahiraja, the ICGLR National

Coordinator for Burundi, who commended the ICGLR Secretariat for organizing the workshop and highlighted the ICGLR-RTF mandate. Additionally, Mr. Samuel Nininahazwe, representing Gitega's Governor, praised the collaboration between civil and police authorities in combating SGBV, especially through case referrals.

### Visit to the Humura One-Stop Center

Following the workshop, the ICGLR-RTF team, alongside Mrs. Girukwishaka, visited the Humura One-Stop Center in Gitega. Established in 2012, the Humura Center provides holistic services to survivors of SGBV, including medical,



psychosocial, legal, and socio-economic support.

During the visit, attendees were moved by the testimony of Vénérand and Cyrilla, a couple with nine children who overcame severe marital strife caused by alcohol abuse. Cyrilla's courage to seek help led to their inclusion in the centre's care program. Today, Vénérand acknowledges the transformation: "We were poor due to constant conflicts. Now, harmony prevails, and we work together for our family's well-being."

### **A Beacon of Hope**

The Humura Center has treated 14,000 cases since its inception, serving as a beacon of hope for those in despair. The center's holistic approach and dedicated professionals have been instrumental in providing comprehensive care and support to survivors.

### **Future Actions and Implementation**

The ICGLR Secretariat, through its Kampala-based training centre, headed by Dr Janviere Ndirahisha, aims to strengthen Member States'

capacities to eliminate SGBV. The newly developed action plan, created with input from Burundian professionals, will be implemented with support from various stakeholders, including gender ministries and international partners.

The workshop's success underscores the importance of continuous training and collaboration in the fight against SGBV in the region



## New Project Supports ICGLR and Its Member States to Improve Mineral Resource Governance

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and IMPACT launched a new, four-year, European Union funded project to improve mineral governance in the region while advancing security, stability, and development.

The Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region project builds the capacity of the ICGLR and its Member States to address artisanal mineral flows and harness their potential as drivers for economic and social development, as well as stability and security.

Between 2024-2027, the project will aim to:

- 1. Improve the control of artisanal mineral resources** by updating the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR) which outlines the six tools to address the illegal exploitation of resources. It was originally adopted in 2010 by Heads of State through the Lusaka Declaration. The project will update and support the implementation of the RINR to transition from a tool conceived to rein in illegal activities, to a forward-looking instrument, reflecting stakeholder needs, supporting economic and social development.
- Apply best practices to artisanal gold exports** to align with the ICGLR's artisanal and small-scale (ASM) gold strategy. The project will provide training on best practice models to reform ASM gold export regimes and support



engagement with actors across the supply chain—within Member States and internationally.

- Adopt improved Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) systems** and better harness data in Member States. The RCM is a compulsory regional standard for certification of the 3Ts and gold sourced from or transiting across an ICGLR Member State, currently implemented by five Member States. The project will support more efficient RCM systems that meet market expectations.

The project team will work directly with the ICGLR's Technical Unit on Natural Resources, based in Bujumbura, Burundi. The Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region project adopts the approach of building the capacity of the ICGLR Technical Unit on Natural Resources, who in turn will support the Member States.

By developing a strong curriculum of resources including implementation guidance, training materials, and best practice papers or running train-the-trainer workshops, the ICGLR

staff will be able to more effectively support Member States to adopt policies and procedures to improve natural resource governance.

This project, officially the Regional action to contribute to the improvement of mineral resources governance in the Great Lakes region, builds on its first phase, funded by the European Union which ended in 2022. The project's focus on improved mineral governance is one component of the larger European Union program aimed to consolidate peace and security in Africa's Great Lakes region.

### Context

ASM is an important livelihood for over five million people in the region. While much spotlight has been on Democratic Republic of Congo's minerals sector and its ties to conflict financing, the linkages to cross-border smuggling, and informal supply chains of other ICGLR countries have increasingly come into focus as contributing drivers.

Of the four minerals making up the focus of the RINR, gold is considered the most significant in terms of



conflict financing and revenue lost by African governments because of the large volumes of contraband gold that are illegally smuggled out of Member States. While many traceability and due diligence mechanisms have been implemented for the 3Ts, and conflict financing tied to these minerals seems to have decreased, it appears that gold smuggling is thriving.

Despite important progress, much remains to be done across the countries of the region, both for those that have begun applying the RCM and those that have not. At the same time, ICGLR Member States are increasingly turning their attention to using the mining sector as an engine for economic growth and are keen to broaden the scope of the RINR to support the development of their mineral sectors.

The ICGLR was created in response to the recognition that political instability and conflicts in Central Africa have a considerable regional dimension and require a concerted effort to promote sustainable peace and development. With 12 Member States, it is the only platform regionally that has a strong political mandate, continued support, and technical expertise to work on illicit trade of the minerals sector.

### History of Collaboration

The project comes as the ICGLR and IMPACT have renewed their Memorandum of Understanding in January 2024, originally signed in 2011.

IMPACT has a long history as a technical partner to the ICGLR. After the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region was signed by Heads of State in 2006, IMPACT began advising the ICGLR on the development of a regional framework to address the illicit exploitation of resources.

In 2010, as Heads of State and Government signed the Lusaka Declaration, IMPACT began technical support to the ICGLR to implement the six tools part of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR). This support has included drafting the Regional Certification Mechanism standards, supporting implementation nationally, as well as helping to develop a prototype of the Regional Database on Mineral Flows.

The Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region project is funded as part of the European Union's renewed 2023 strategy for the region which commits to addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as the mismanagement of natural resources. The project was officially launched by the EU in January 2024 in Bujumbura at the "Building Together the Future of the Great Lakes Region" conference.

## Launch of 'WPS Agenda in Great Lakes Region' Project July 5th, 2024, Lusaka, Zambia



On the 5th July 2024, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH launched the 'Incorporating Local Perspectives into the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Great Lakes Region (iWPS)' project.

This initiative underscores their





commitment to fostering inclusive peace processes within the Great Lakes Region. The project launch was officiated by ICGLR Executive Secretary, Ambassador João Samuel Caholo; Honourable Jack Mwiimbu, Zambia Ministry of Home affairs and internal security and the Program Director for the "Incorporating Local Perspectives in the implementation of WPS Agenda (iWPS) / GIZ, Ms Soetkin Meertens. Their presence signifies a united front in addressing the region's challenges.

Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 which speaks to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the iWPS project is dedicated to integrating local perspectives and strengthening accountability for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at regional level in the Great Lakes Region. "The iWPS project represents our renewed commitment to implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and represents a significant step towards ensuring that the voices and experiences of local women's organizations are at the forefront of efforts to promote peace and gender equality in the region", underscored the ICGLR Executive Secretary, Ambassador João Samuel Caholo.

Through a holistic approach geared towards empowering local grassroots voices, the project will focus on three main areas: enhancing the organizational capacity of grassroots organizations; strengthening civil society networks and their access to regional decision-making spaces; and strengthening accountability through the use of data-based local knowledge in the implementation of the WPS agenda.

"It is our conviction that this project will ultimately help to bridge the gap between grassroots organisations



*Honourable Jacob Jack Mwiimbu, Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security Of the Republic of Zambia*

and national networks in the ICGLR Member States and enhance coordination and monitoring of Regional Action Plans, thus enhancing effective implementation of the WPS Agenda in the region", emphasized Honourable Jacob Jack Mwiimbu, Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security Of the Republic of Zambia.

Nicole Nyangolo, Executive Secretary of COCAFEM/GL stressed the importance of civil society organisations in implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: "As COCAFEM/GL, we contributed to the Kampala Declaration on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. The consultations conducted by COCAFEM/GL and other regional CSOs allowed the Regional Women's Forum to address our concerns about the situation of SGBV to the Heads of State and Government".

Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the iWPS

project will be implemented by the ICGLR with the support of GIZ and a network of local, national, regional and international Civil Society Organisations. It will be implemented until December 2026 - having started in January 2024.



*From the ICGLR Secretariat*  
**SEASON'S GREETINGS  
AND WARM WISHES  
FOR THE**

*New Year*

2025