## Launch of the Project on Cooperation on Peace, Security and Responsible Natural Resource Governance in the Great Lakes Region

The Executive Secretary Ambassador João Samuel Caholo presided over the official launch of the Project on Cooperation on Peace, Security, and Responsible Natural Resource Governance in the Great Lakes Region on 13th February 2023 in Bujumbura. The project has been funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the period 2023 to 2026.

The project works jointly with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), in cooperating with the ICGLR Technical Unit (TU) for Regional Initiative on Natural Resources (RINR) in the implementation, advising and strengthening the capacities of selected stakeholders in the Regional Certification Mechanism.

---

**Uganda National Launch of 16 Days of Activism**

---

**The United Arab Emirates (UAE) gearing up for responsible sourcing of precious metals**

---

**Regional Training facility interventions**

---

**Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy and Good Governance: Betting on Women’s leadership to pacify electoral competitions in the Great Lakes region**
In his opening speech, Ambassador Caholo recalled the contribution of the ICGLR to the resolution of conflicts and consolidation of peace during tense moments. He lauded the peacebuilding efforts of regional leaders, led by H.E. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the ICGLR in holding consultative talks with key stakeholders under the aegis of the Luanda process and in close collaboration with the efforts by H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, the President of the Republic of Burundi and chairperson of the East African Community (EAC).

The UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, represented by Senior Economic Affairs Officer Mr. Serigne Dienne at the launch, called on partners and private sector to sustain and enhance support for natural resource governance in the region, which is critical for stability in eastern DRC.

Other speakers included the German Ambassador to Burundi, H.E. Dieter Reinl and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Burundi H.E. Jeroen Steeghs. Ambassador Reinl emphasized the political aspect of the project and suggested a collaborative approach among high-level officials to tackle issues related to peace, security, and mineral resource governance. On his part, Ambassador Steeghs, highlighted the core engagement in the Great Lakes region which stresses on addressing the prolonged crisis in eastern DRC at a regional level. Both Ambassadors expressed their countries’ commitment to supporting the Great Lakes region in achieving stability, peace, and sustainable development.

It is envisaged that this project will strengthen cooperation on the responsible governance of natural resources for peace and security in the Great Lakes Region by supporting and facilitating regional and national stakeholders in the Great Lakes Region to control and manage the extraction and trade of natural resources more effectively and responsibly.
Dialogue has the power to transform communities and build bridges of understanding. For decades, persistent conflict in the Great Lakes Region has impacted all aspects of life: stability, development and the economy. But mediators now stand firm as advocates of hope for a peaceful future.

The Great Lakes Region has enormous socioeconomic potential thanks to its abundant natural resources and youthful population. However, the region also faces severe economic and political challenges with far-reaching effects on peace, security and governance. Recurrent conflicts and crises afflict the area, with tensions exacerbated by already-existing socioeconomic and security issues. These hurdles were further intensified by health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ebola outbreak.

In this context of shared historical and societal realities, interconnected conflicts in the region pose a challenge to state-building and nation-building. The slow transition towards political freedom and economic empowerment of citizens has led to cycles of violence that affect stability, development and economic progress.

Insider mediation has been utilized as a mechanism to achieving peace and stability by complementing national efforts with more proactive, flexible and locally embedded solutions and approaches. Insider mediation can be distinguished from more traditional mediation as it targets figures, groups or institutions internal to a conflict, using their influence and credibility to mediate, advocate for and facilitate Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration (DDR/RR) with armed groups.

As part of the UN’s pilot initiative ‘Support for Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region’, UNDP partnered with the International Conference on the Great Lakes region (ICGLR) to train insider mediators from across the Great Lakes Region on DDR/RR. 87 insider mediators, including 38 women and 49 men from eight countries, participated in the training and learning programme. With deep knowledge about the roots of conflicts in the region, equipping qualified individuals with the skills to mediate disputes and restore peace is essential to providing a credible voice for effective conflict resolution.

The training helped us understand the role of an insider mediator in conflict situations like the one we are going through in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in Goma. We are now in the process of creating a network of women from the Great Lakes region called Femmes Médiateuses Internes de la Région des Grand Lacs (FEMIRGL) to continue training women from this region on insider mediation and the reinforcement of the economic and social capacities of young people and women.

Linda Babingwa, Gender Specialist, Union des Juristes Engages pour les Opprimés, la Paix et le Developpement (UJEOPAD-RDC).

Building on existing partnerships is essential to developing and strengthening the capacities of insider mediators to support DDR/RR processes across regional, national and local levels.

Jean Eudès Bisonga, Director of Peace and Security, ICGLR.

UNDP has made progress in supporting the ICGLR in implementing its Pact on Peace, Security and Stability in the Great Lakes Region, which serves as a legal framework and agenda for the ICGLR to create the conditions for security, stability and development among the ICGLR Member States. These partnerships are integral to creating sustainable solutions that promote peacebuilding and help communities affected by conflict build resilient futures.

UNDP has had a longstanding partnership with ICGLR, especially the Peace and Security Department. Given the importance of the work done in the Great Lakes region, it is crucial to leverage opportunities to collaborate with partners in support of the region.

Alessandra Casazza, Manager, UNDP Resilience Hub for Africa.
Developing an ICGLR Comprehensive Durable Solutions Strategy for displaced persons in the Great Lakes Region

A peer learning event on comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees was held from the 31st January to 1st February 2023. The activity was graciously hosted by the Government of the Republic of Burundi and co-organized by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat for the Great Lakes (ReDSS GL), and the United High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with funding provided by the European Union (EU).

The main objective of the event was to bring together policymakers, practitioners, academics, and other stakeholders in the field of refugees' comprehensive durable solutions, to facilitate the development of an ICGLR strategy and action plan to promote comprehensive durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes Region.

While addressing participants, Ambassador Mohammed highlighted efforts that the ICGLR has engaged in addressing the problems of refugees in cooperation with regional and international organizations including the adoption of the 2017 Brazzaville Declaration on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes region as well as pledges made during the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 to develop a Comprehensive Strategy for Durable Solutions for displaced persons in the Great Lakes Region. He further noted that the development of comprehensive durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons is crucial to harness peace, security, and development in the Great Lakes Region and pledged the willingness of the ICGLR Secretariat to work with other partners including EU, UNHCR, and Red Cross in this regard.

Participants at the event were drawn from the ministries in charge of refugee affairs, from parliaments and ICGLR National Coordination Mechanisms. In addition, refugees and returnees from the Great Lakes Region had an opportunity to share their experiences on refugee and returnee status while others showcased the income generating activities that they are engaged in in their host countries.

The culmination of the workshop was an outcome document with key recommendations on durable solutions.

African countries disproportionately suffer the impact of climate change—yet their contribution to global CO2 emissions is minimal—3%. This is much lower than the 29% CO2 contribution by Asian economies. Yet, droughts, floods, and destruction to crucial infrastructure are now more frequent and intense. Livelihoods are being destroyed. Indeed, some coastal and riparian regions face the threat of being submerged as water levels rise. As a global challenge, climate change requires global action and Africa COP 27 is such an opportunity.

African countries would require a high; around 5% more of their national incomes for climate adaption. But delivering less in critical and essential public goods and services—to support the recovery of their populations affected with majority being poor. The costs are huge. For example, Republic of Congo require about 3.8% of her GDP for climate adaption, less than spending on health care of 2.08%; DRC require 4.7% of GDP compared to 3.5% spend on health, and Sudan 4.7% of GDP compared to 4.8% on health. The countries lack the financial resources to respond. However, rich countries are not honoring their pledges to deliver US$100 billion a year (from 2020 to 2025) to help low-income countries mitigate and adapt to climate. Climate change is best thought as “a risk multiplier” that worsens security risks and conflicts in many Africa countries—it undermines human security and livelihoods especially to the most vulnerable communities. The channels are varied including temperature variability; droughts and floods; resource conflicts, food insecurity; forced migration and destruction of critical infrastructure.

In the great lakes region—which harbours about a quarter of the world’s freshwater bodies. The environmental pressures over the region’s natural resources are increasingly playing a significant role in regional stability. There is evidence that a 0.5°C temperature warming increase in the risk of conflict with a 10 to 20-percentage points. Climate change exposes the existing vulnerabilities and worsens pre-existing tensions, weak local governance, and socio-economic challenges such as youth unemployment. And with increased drought and floods, food insecurity is a major concern, with ten countries in the great lake’s region suffering food insecurity. Currently, around fifty million people risk famine in the region, with worse health outcomes. Kenya is facing one of its worst droughts and famine in recent years.

Can the global community act? Putting climate adaption at the top of government policy agenda is a step in the right direction. While making citizens aware of what their role. However, rich countries must keep their part of the deal—avail financial resources to support Africa adapt to climate change and reduce their share of contribution to global CO2 emissions. The financial pledges must be followed by disbursements and concrete action to minimize emissions, in the face of renewed energy crisis; reverting to fossil is not the long-term solution—but green energy and green fiancé is. African COP 27 should prove this commitment and an opportunity for the rich nations to walk the talk. Demonstrate we all care about our dear planet.
The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Secretariat (ICGLR)) and the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNEAD/DPPA), organized a four-day workshop on “Enhancing the Integrity and Inclusivity of Electoral Processes in ICGLR Member States” from 25th to 28th of October 2022 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The main goal of the workshop was to provide an avenue for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and other stakeholders from the region to share experiences and good practices on how best to strengthen the credibility, inclusivity and peacefulness of their elections.

It also addressed questions, related to but not limited to, how to enhance public confidence in EMBs and electoral processes and enhance election administration capacity; the role of EMBs and other stakeholders including media, CSOs, political parties, in ensuring electoral processes are inclusive and peaceful, in line with the ICGLR Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 1st December 2006 and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. The participants also discussed the role of EMBs and other relevant actors in promoting effective electoral dispute resolution mechanisms and the prevention and mitigation of electoral violence.

Participants found the workshop very useful as it offered a space for experience sharing on Enhancing the Integrity and Inclusivity of Electoral Processes, good practices, best practices, challenges and lessons learned from other countries, stimulated reflections on broadening the engagement of all sectors of society in the electoral process and also the opportunity to proffer practical recommendations on how to ensure future elections in the Great Lakes region are conducted with integrity and are inclusive.

The four-day workshop generated the following recommendations, there was need to:

(a) stimulate positive political will from leaders in the region to enhance inclusivity in the electoral process;

(b) increase participation of youth, PWDs and other marginalized and underrepresented groups in the political process, including through provision of voter education;

(c) enhance the use of Voter Identification Devices (VIDs) in polling stations, where possible and where the conditions permit, to enhance the voting experience;
(d) Conduct a feasibility study to assess all various aspects before introducing IT in elections, including when exploring the possibility of measures such as E-Voting;

(e) Set gender-related goals for registration as well as a pool of women electoral experts;

(f) Align national youth minimum voting age and eligibility to run for office in line with regional and international frameworks;

(g) Promote free, independent and responsible media; and

(h) Enhance media, political party and spokespersons/Media Directors training in the Electoral Process – Legal Framework is key.

Did you know that

Better management of electoral processes characterized by fair justice for all actors promotes the acceptance of results is important to trigger good governance.

Conclusion

Over and above, it was held that better management of electoral processes characterized by fair justice for all actors promotes the acceptance of results was important to trigger good governance. There was need to provide awareness to various groups through different means including community radios, television and national radio programming and participate in various exhibition events. Before introducing technology in elections, it is of paramount importance to ensure a feasibility study is conducted by the concerned EMB or other relevant national stakeholders to review the various aspects of the matter and to explore whether the use of such technologies is needed and useful or not. It was noted that the participation of women, youth, and persons with disabilities in electoral and political processes is very low. Therefore, there is need to enhance their meaningful participation in electoral and political processes.
The United Arab Emirates (UAE) gearing up for responsible sourcing of precious metals

Dr. Mali made a presentation on the recent developments around responsible mining and sourcing in the Great Lakes Region highlighting the six tools under the Region Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR) that have supported minerals not falling into the wrong hands, as well as the harmonization of laws and creation of a database. Dr. Mali also pleased the DMCC and the UAE for taking the matter of responsible sourcing serious. He called upon investors to ensure that the added value to minerals in the Region to enhance youth employment and fiscal revenue for countries in the region to fight poverty.

The importance of improving traceability and certification processes for gold puts the region at the path for peace, stability, and development. Gold exporters, transit and destination countries have a critical role to play.

This sold-out Conference held from 21st to 22nd November 2022 in Dubai was attended by traders, regulators, industry bodies and non-governmental bodies was graced by the Ministry of State for Foreign Trade, Dr. Tnani Bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi. The Honourable Minister mentioned that the UAE had recently updated its Due Diligence Regulations for Responsible Sourcing of Gold. He, thus, called upon all gold traders, refineries and other regulated entities operating in the UAE to ensure that the meet International Standards and best practices.

The International Conference for Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) successfully participated at the 10th Edition of the Dubai Precious Metals Conference (DPMC) organized by the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) in partnership with United Arab Emirates Ministry of Economy. The ICGLR was represented by Dr. Emmanuel Makumba Mali, the Director for Democracy and Good Governance and Mr. Gerard Nayuburundi, the Natural Resources Unit Coordinator. The 10th Edition of the Dubai Precious Metals Conference (DPMC) was held under the theme: “The future of precious metals trade, stepping up sourcing, integrity, financialization of the precious metals trade and resetting global price benchmarks.”
ICGL-RTF interventions in Burundi: Joint initiatives with COCAFEM-GL in addressing GBV through Gender Accountability Days and Media Activism on review of the GBV Law in Burundi.

With funding from CARE International, the ICGL-RTF in collaboration with COCAFEM implemented two timely activities in Burundi. Engaging elected leaders and media actors.

**Gender Accountability Days in Burundi**

Launched at a joint workshop in August 2022, the Gender Accountability Day sessions spanned to the month of December 2022 in the eight focal provinces of Bujumbura, Bubanza, Rumonge, Gitega, Ngozi, Kayanza, Muyinga and Kirundo. These sessions created a rapprochement between elected women at the local level and elected women parliamentarians, and natives of the eight provinces. This initiative will be conducted annually in the eight focal provinces success stories will be documented, a model developed and duplicated in all the 12 Member States.

**Participants for the Media Synergy include:**
- ICGL-RTF Regional Director
- Rep from CARE Burundi
- Rep from Ministry of Gender
- Rep from the Ministry of Justice
- Rep from one stop Centre(Seruka)
- Association of Lawyers and Journalists.

Officiated by Hon. Janvière Ndirahisha the ICGL-RTF Regional Director, aided by Ms Flaviana Charles ICGLR Director for Gender, Women and Children. The elected officials were encouraged to setup Joint projects with the natives of their provinces, this will create an opportunity for both parties to meet, collaborate and find feasible solutions for their provinces at the grassroots level.

**Media Activism on the Review of GBV Law in Burundi**

Nine local media actors were engaged in a collaborative dialogue to sway positive changes in the Burundian law on Gender Based Violence, hosted at the RTNB/ARB premises on December 15, 2022. The collaboration attracted participation from a wide audience, which identified gaps in the law and confirmed the need for its review. This initiative was co-funded by Care Burundi and ICGL-RTF, with technical input from COCAFEM (Concertation des Collectifs des Associations féminines de la région des Grands Lacs).

This followed a high level meeting from 8 – 9, December 2022 that took place in Bujumbura. The meeting engaged officials from the Judiciary, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Gender in its attributions and legal practitioners in Burundi. These recognized that:

**There are still many elements to be included in the law, to effectively protect Burundian women. The law is very incomplete, containing contradictions and still needs to be consolidated so that it really serves the fight against Gender-Based Violence in Burundi.**
Betting on Women’s leadership to pacify electoral competitions in the Great Lakes region

Between the 17th and the 24th of November, three high-level peer learning events were organized in Nairobi. One with ICGLR Member States’ Parliamentary Gender Committees members, another with ICGLR EMBs Chief executive officers, and a last one with ICGLR Political parties’ representatives.

The main aim of the workshops was to strengthen women’s representation in EMBs in ICGLR Member States. The events were organized by the LMRC, the Conference Secretariat, ICGLR Forum of Parliaments and ICGLR Regional Women’s Forum in close collaboration with the OSESG-GL, UINDP, UNWOMEN and the Government of Kenya. The three different stakeholders drafted Action Plans to be implemented at national and regional levels in order to strengthen the representation of women in the EMB process, with Commissioners in some MS being appointed on the basis of political allegiance rather than competence. Other challenges include electoral violence, preventing women from pursuing careers in electoral management and socio-cultural attitudes unfavorable to gender empowerment in general, as well as lack of technical skills and self-confidence among women administrators.

To ensure a fairer and more effective representation of women in the ICGLR EMBs, the study recommends a multi-pronged approach focusing on creating an enabling legal and policy framework, as well as regional peer learning/capacity building focusing on key stakeholders, including the EMBs themselves, political parties and parliamentarians.

The peer learning events were organized to address issues and challenges identified in the study on the Situation, Needs and Capacity Gaps of Women Administrators in EMBs in ICGLR Member States conducted between September, 2021 and July 2022. The study found that women are still underrepresented when it comes to key positions at both policy and technical levels in the EMBs. Contributing factors to underrepresentation include gaps in legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks and challenges related to the appointment process.

The project on Strengthening Representation of Women in EMBs in ICGLR MS draws its inspiration from the regional Workshop on “The Participation, Representation and Protection of Women in Electoral Processes in the Great Lakes Region” held from 12-13 November 2019 in Addis Ababa. The Workshop was organized by the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Advisory Council in the Great Lakes Region, composed of the African Union, FemWise-Africa and UNWOMEN. During the deliberations of this Workshop, participants noted that the participation of women in electoral processes, particularly within EMBs, is hindered by cultural factors and the persistence of stereotypes about women in leadership and decision-making. Participants highlighted the importance of a gender audit of EMBs to strengthen advocacy for better representation of women in EMBs at political and technical levels.
Betting on Women’s leadership to pacify electoral competitions in the Great Lakes region (Continued)

Accordingly, the Workshop called on the Guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (C-PSC) of the Democratic Republic of Congo, under the leadership of the AU/ICGLR, to work with the Association of African Electoral Authorities and Regional Election Management Bodies, to ensure gender equality on boards of directors and to promote mutual learning of women in EMBs, in particular by establishing a Network of Women Leaders and Administrators in electoral activities.

Why is women’s fair representation in Electoral Management Bodies crucial?

These bodies are at the heart of the many challenges that rock our societies, unfortunately, sometimes tragically, when elections go wrong. The responsibility for the quality of elections should not be placed too heavily on the bodies responsible for managing them, as EMBs are essentially technical institutions. But neither can we ignore the crucial role they play.

As technical as they can be, in our region, the electoral management bodies are in the eye of the political storm. It is therefore essential that those who make up half of the voters and who too often suffer disproportionately from the consequences of toxic political competitions also have a say in these bodies.

Despite numerous counter-examples, studies suggest that female leadership when given a chance to manage affairs and express itself relatively autonomously from that of men, is more conciliatory and more sensitive to social consequences of political dynamics.

Thus, beyond the dimensions of social justice represented by a fair expression of female leadership in election management bodies, society as a whole, men and women, could benefit from it.

But how to ensure that female leadership is expressed in a way that is certainly in solidarity with men but also autonomous, when necessary, in an institution? Early attempts focused on numbers. The more women there are represented in an institution, while significant, was insufficient to allow the expression of autonomous female leadership. The quality of the representation of women and men, in solidarity with the latter, was essential.

With the passing of time, it appeared that the number of women represented in an institution, while significant, was insufficient to allow the expression of autonomous female leadership. The quality of the representation of women and men, in solidarity with the latter, was essential.
Uganda National Launch of 16 Days of Activism under the theme: UNITE! Activism to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Kampala on 24th November 2022, led by Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD)

A Common goal aimed at bringing an end to Violence in Uganda was Launched in Kampala under 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence Campaign whose theme was: "UNITE"! Activism to End Violence against Women and Girls. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), with support from UN Women Uganda; organised the National Launch in Kampala on 24th/November/2022; following its inception in 2021(16 Days of 2021) basing on a report in which Uganda Police Force received 16,000 reports of sexual related offences- one report every 30 minutes.

In their remarks the Ambassador of Sweden who spoke on behalf of the Development Partners and Donor Community in Uganda; shared recent statistics on teenage pregnancy. While the Chairperson National Women’s Council Faridah Kibowa and the Honourable Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development; Betty Amongi reinforced with figures from Uganda Bureau of Statistics and emphasized the timely importance of this Campaign.

The Launch was a Call to Action; where representation from United Nations Family; the Diplomatic Community and the Government highlighted the need for concerted efforts to take urgent action. The Launch also left Participants asking, "What Can we Do?" to make the World safer for Women and Girls.

They therefore committed to continue working together to end violence in Uganda.

The Participants were concerned that there was a continued prevalence of violence against women and girls; and the dire need to urgently work together towards ending all forms of violence against women.

This was evident from the remarks shared by Donors; the testimonies from the Community and the commitment to the cause shared by Government representatives through Videos that were played at the Launch; illustrating the work conducted in Uganda to support survivors of violence and efforts to prevent all forms of discrimination against women.