



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION-ICGLR

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ICGLR ON COMMEMORATING 75 YEARS OF THE REFUGEE CONVENTION

28 July 2026

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) stands in solidarity with the millions of refugees across the Great Lakes region and the world. We honour their resilience, dignity, and courage – and we reaffirm our collective responsibility to uphold the fundamental right to seek safety, for every person forced to flee.

A Region Still Confronting Forced Displacement

The Great Lakes region remains one of the most severely affected by forced displacement on the African continent. Millions of refugees continue to live in situations of protracted displacement, often for years or even decades, while host communities continue to demonstrate remarkable solidarity in the face of growing pressures. Yet across the region, refugees are also making important social, cultural and economic contributions to the communities that host them. When provided with the protection, legal certainty and opportunities envisaged by the Refugee Convention, refugees are not only able to rebuild their own lives, but also contribute to more resilient, inclusive and prosperous societies.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, we recognise the profound progress that has been made in strengthening international refugee protection. Yet today's displacement challenges are increasingly complex, protracted and interconnected, requiring renewed international cooperation, regional solidarity and sustained investment to translate the Convention's principles into lasting protection, inclusion and durable solutions.

Building a Regional Framework for Durable Solutions

Responding to displacement requires both immediate humanitarian action and longer-term investments in policies, institutions and local systems that enable protection, inclusion and opportunity for refugees, returnees, and host communities alike.

It is against this backdrop that the ICGLR continues to exert efforts to address problems of refugees. On October 16, 2017, in Brazzaville, the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee of ICGLR issued the [Brazzaville Declaration on Eradication of Statelessness](#). On November 7, 2020, in Brazzaville, the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee of the ICGLR approved the ICGLR Consolidated Action Plan on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region. Currently, the ICGLR is finalizing the Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees in the Great Lakes Region (2026–2034). Building on the principles of the Refugee Convention, the Strategy provides a common regional framework to support Member States in advancing durable solutions through stronger policy coherence, practical cooperation and shared learning across the Great Lakes Region.

The contributions of Member States, as well as of refugee-led organisations, civil society, academia and other partners have been crucial to shaping this process. This work would also not have been possible without the financial support of partners, whose sustained investment reflects a shared commitment to regional ownership and longer-term solutions. I also wish to express my appreciation to the European Union and the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) for their support in translating political commitments into a coherent and implementable framework, and to UNHCR for their technical engagement throughout.

Our Call to Action

As ICGLR Member States move towards the formal adoption of the Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees in the Great Lakes Region (2026–2034), I call upon all stakeholders to:

- Strengthen national legal frameworks and policies to protect refugees and facilitate their inclusion in economic and social life;
- Invest in host communities to reinforce their capacity and sustain their vital role in welcoming displaced populations;
- Ensure the meaningful participation of refugees in the decisions that shape their futures;
- Mobilise resources, partnerships and technical capacity to translate commitments into tangible results for the people of the Great Lakes region;

Ultimately, the success of our regional efforts will be measured by their relevance to the realities of refugees, returnees, and host communities. As we commemorate this important milestone, let us renew our collective commitment to upholding the principles of the Refugee Convention by strengthening protection, advancing inclusion, and translating these commitments into practical action and durable solutions across the Great Lakes Region.

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