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MEETING OF ICGLR MEMBER STATES REFUGEE COMMISSIONERS AND NATIONAL COORDINATORS

22–23 October 2026, Nairobi, Kenya

1. Preamble

1.1 The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Secretariat, with the support of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), technical support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and funding from the European Union (EU), convened the Meeting of ICGLR Member States Refugee Commissioners and National Coordinators on 22–23 October 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kenya in the development process of the ICGLR Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees and Returnees.

1.2 Refugee Commissioners and ICGLR National Coordinators from the following twelve (12) ICGLR Member States participated in the meeting: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of South Sudan, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Republic of Zambia.

1.3 Representatives of the ICGLR Secretariat, the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the European Union, refugee-led organisations, ReDSS, UNHCR, UNDP, the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, development partners, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental and civil society organisations also attended the meeting.

1.4 The meeting was officially opened with remarks by the ICGLR Deputy Executive Secretary, the Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Burundi, the National Coordinator of the ICGLR National Coordination Mechanism for Kenya, and the Acting Deputy Commissioner for Refugee Affairs of the Republic of Kenya. The opening remarks welcomed the progress made in developing the ICGLR Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees and its Action Plan and underscored the importance of national ownership, strengthened regional cooperation and translating regional commitments into practical action. The speakers also highlighted the need for inclusive approaches to durable solutions, taking into account the needs of refugees, returnees and host communities, as well as sustained partnerships and international responsibility-sharing to support implementation.

1.5 The meeting marked an important milestone in a sustained, Member State-led process building on the recommendation of the 2019 High-Level Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Refugee Issues in Munyonyo, Uganda, and reaffirmed at the 2023 Regional Peer-Learning Event in Bujumbura, Burundi. The development of the Strategy and Action Plan was guided by a Regional Advisory Group and informed by extensive consultations with Member States, refugee-led organisations, regional institutions, civil society, academia, and humanitarian and development partners. The process also included technical validation by Member State experts in April 2026 and subsequent consultations with Refugee Commissioners.

1.6 The meeting provided an important opportunity for Refugee Commissioners, National Coordinators and other key stakeholders to review and validate the draft Regional Strategy and Action Plan, identify initial priorities for regional cooperation and implementation, and consider their recommendation for Ministerial endorsement.

Following presentations and deliberations over the two days, the participants highlighted the following:

2. Regional Displacement Context

2.1 **Noted** the regional displacement context presented by UNHCR, including approximately 5.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers hosted across ICGLR Member States, many of which simultaneously serve as countries of origin, asylum, transit and return. Recognised that persistent barriers to durable solutions often have regional and cross-border dimensions that cannot be addressed by individual Member States alone, underscoring the importance of strengthened regional cooperation, political dialogue, peer learning and coordinated action, while

respecting national contexts, priorities and capacities.

2.2 **Noted** the increase in refugee return movements across the region, including the high proportion of self-organised returns. Recognised the importance of voluntary, safe and dignified return, accompanied by sustainable reintegration, while acknowledging the persistent challenges relating to security, access to land, documentation, basic services and livelihoods in areas of return.

2.3 **Took note** of the presentation by UNHCR of its 50by35 vision, which aims to reduce by half, by 2035, the number of refugees in long-term displacement who depend on humanitarian assistance, underpinned by state-led policy changes as well as strategic partnerships and **sustainable** financing. Recognised its complementarity with the objectives of the Regional Strategy**.**

2.4 **Welcomed** the presentation by the African Refugee-Led Network (ARN) on the outcomes of the September 2026 Regional Symposium of Refugee-Led Organisations in Bujumbura, Burundi. Took note of the priorities highlighted, including access to legal identity and documentation, opportunities for socio-economic inclusion, and meaningful refugee participation in durable solutions processes. Recognised the value of continued engagement with refugees and refugee-led organisations in supporting the implementation of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan.

3. Presentation of the Draft Regional Strategy and Action Plan

3.1 **Took note** of the presentation of the revised draft Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees (2026–2034) and its accompanying Action Plan, including the revisions made following technical validation and subsequent consultations with Member States and other stakeholders.

3.2 Recognised the importance of building on existing national policies, programmes and institutional arrangements, while strengthening regional cooperation where shared and cross-border challenges cannot be addressed through national efforts alone. Highlighted the ICGLR's added value in facilitating political dialogue, cross-border cooperation, exchange of experiences and good practices among Member States, collective monitoring and review, and partnership alignment, while complementing existing national and regional mechanisms.

3.3 **Took note** of the five mutually reinforcing pillars of the Strategy: (i) national ownership and regional coordination; (ii) legal identity, status and mobility; (iii) protection and inclusion through national and local systems; (iv) economic

inclusion, financial services, and social protection; and (v) comprehensive solutions pathways. Recommended recasting the pillars to place greater emphasis on comprehensive solutions pathways.

3.4 **Acknowledged** the comments, reservations and recommendations provided by Member States, including the need to strengthen linkages between durable solutions and the ICGLR's existing mandate on peace and security and mechanisms for addressing the root causes of displacement, and to ensure consistency with national legal and policy frameworks. Underlined that the Strategy constitutes a regional policy and cooperation framework and does not establish additional legally binding obligations on Member States, while remaining grounded in applicable national, regional and international legal frameworks.

3.5 **Recognised** the interlinkages between durable solutions, legal identity and civil documentation, the prevention of statelessness, and protection-sensitive responses to onward movements. Emphasised the ICGLR's role in facilitating regional dialogue, peer learning and the exchange of experiences and good practices among Member States to address shared and cross-border challenges in these areas.

3.6 **Affirmed** that the Regional Strategy and Action Plan provides an appropriate framework for advancing durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes Region, and committed to supporting the ICGLR's regional actions and advancing nationally owned, contextually adapted implementation at Member State level.

4. From Strategy to Action: Priorities for Regional Cooperation and Implementation

4.1 **Emphasised** the importance of initiating implementation focusing on identified practical and achievable regional priorities that respond to shared challenges and demonstrate the added value of ICGLR cooperation. Identified three initial thematic priorities for regional action, without limiting the broader scope of the Strategy's five pillars or the ability of Member States to advance action under other pillars, and to be reviewed through the biennial regional review and learning processes envisaged in the Strategy:

4.1.1 **Legal identity, documentation and status clarity:** Strengthen regional cooperation and technical exchange on legal identity, civil registration and documentation, including identifying shared legal and operational barriers, facilitating cooperation on documentation recognition and verification consistent with applicable data protection frameworks, and exchanging good practices on statelessness prevention and protection-sensitive onward

movements.

4.1.2 **Voluntary return and repatriation and sustainable reintegration:** Strengthen regional dialogue and cooperation between countries of origin and host countries on voluntary, safe and dignified return and repatriation and sustainable reintegration, complementing and strengthening existing bilateral and tripartite arrangements, facilitating peer learning on reintegration approaches, share frameworks and guidance, and promoting monitoring of sustainable reintegration outcomes beyond return figures alone.

4.1.3 **Strengthening national and local systems:** Promote peer learning, technical partnerships and **financing** alignment to strengthen national and local systems through nationally appropriate, area-based approaches that benefit refugees, returnees and host communities.

4.2 **Recommended** that, following consideration of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan by the High-Level Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Refugee Issues, the ICGLR Secretariat convene an initial meeting of Experts on Refugee Issues from Member States, as envisaged under the **Action** Plan, to identify and sequence initial actions for regional cooperation, support the development of nationally led implementation plans or equivalent arrangements, and identify opportunities for technical and financial support.

4.3 **Recognised** the importance of sustainable financing and international responsibility-sharing, alongside national investments, to support implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan. Emphasised the need to strengthen strategic partnerships and explore innovative financing approaches and mechanisms to mobilise and diversify resources for durable solutions. Committed to initiating engagement on financing and resource mobilisation as part of the adoption process and sustaining these efforts throughout implementation, with the ICGLR Secretariat facilitating dialogue among Member States and financing partners to strengthen alignment of resources with regional and nationally identified priorities.

5. Advancing Durable Solutions through Regional Complementarity and Cooperation

5.1 Recognised the importance of strengthening coherence and complementarity between the ICGLR Regional Strategy and relevant initiatives of the EAC and IGAD, as well as other regional processes, including the Regional Roadmap on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Burundian Refugees. Emphasised the importance of building on respective mandates, existing commitments and

institutional arrangements, avoiding duplication and identifying opportunities for coordinated regional action.

5.2 Recommended that the ICGLR Secretariat strengthen engagement with the EAC, IGAD and other relevant regional institutions to identify practical arrangements for coordination and cooperation, including regular exchanges on priorities and planned activities, opportunities for joint technical initiatives, and mutual learning from existing regional experiences and mechanisms. Encouraged cooperation in preparations for the 2027 Global Refugee Forum, including mapping existing commitments and exploring opportunities for complementary or joint regional pledges.

5.3 Recognised the importance of sustained multi-stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the Regional Strategy. Welcomed the continuation of the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) as a platform for technical dialogue, coordination and exchange among Member States, regional institutions, humanitarian and development partners, civil society and refugee representatives. Further encouraged exploration of appropriate mechanisms to strengthen meaningful refugee participation in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Strategy, drawing on relevant regional experiences and in accordance with ICGLR institutional procedures.

5.4 Welcomed the ICGLR Secretariat's commitment to strengthen linkages between the Regional Strategy and its existing work on peace and security, conflict prevention, governance, regional integration and gender equality. Highlighted opportunities to build on existing commitments and mechanisms, including the Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region (2016–2030), to strengthen women's meaningful participation, promote gender-responsive approaches to durable solutions, and integrate gender considerations into monitoring and learning.

6. Recommendations and Way Forward

6.1 Validated the draft Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees (2026–2034) and its accompanying Action Plan, subject to revisions in paragraph 14 and other technical comments provided.

6.2 Recommended their submission to the High-Level Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Refugee Issues in November 2026 for consideration and endorsement, including a roadmap on key regional actions and priorities for initial implementation in 2027.

6.3 Recommended revising the title of the Regional Strategy to explicitly reference both refugees and returnees, reflecting its scope and the importance of sustainable reintegration within the regional durable solutions agenda.

6.4 Requested the ICGLR Secretariat, with the support of ReDSS and UNHCR, to finalise the Strategy and Action Plan in light of the guidance provided at the Meeting and facilitate their submission through the appropriate ICGLR institutional processes.

6.5 Called upon the ICGLR Secretariat, regional economic communities, and technical and financial partners to sustain the momentum generated by the Meeting and mobilise the political support, partnerships and resources necessary to advance implementation of the Regional Strategy and its Action Plan following Ministerial endorsement.

7. Acknowledgments

7.1 Extended appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kenya for hosting the meeting, and to the ICGLR Secretariat for convening it.

7.2 Thanked the Refugee Commissioners and National Coordinators of the ICGLR Member States, and the representatives of refugee-led organisations, for their active participation and contribution.

7.3 Thanked the other various speakers, panellists and panel moderators for their contributions to the discussion.

7.4 Thanked the ICGLR Member States, the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), UNHCR and other relevant United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the UNDP, the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, members of the Regional Advisory Group (RAG), academia, civil society, refugee-led organisations and other technical partners for their valuable contributions to the development of the Regional Strategy on Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees (2026–2034) and its Action Plan.

7.5 Thanked the EU, ReDSS and UNHCR for their financial, technical and logistical support in organising the meeting and in developing the Regional Strategy and its Action Plan.

Done in Nairobi, 23 October 2026