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PRESS RELEASE

Ministerial Meeting in Bujumbura to Advance the ICGLR Regional Strategy for Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees and Returnees

Bujumbura, 27 November 2026 – The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) will convene a High-Level Meeting of Ministers in charge of refugees today, 27 November 2026, in Bujumbura, Burundi, to strengthen regional cooperation and advance comprehensive durable solutions for refugees and returnees across the Great Lakes Region.

Convened by the ICGLR Secretariat and hosted by the Government of the Republic of Burundi, the meeting will bring together Ministers from ICGLR Member States, representatives of regional and international organisations, humanitarian and development partners, and refugee-led organisations. The meeting marks a significant milestone in regional cooperation on forced displacement, moving from shared political commitments towards a common framework for action that strengthens cross-border cooperation and supports nationally led efforts to advance durable solutions for refugees and returnees.

At the centre of the discussions will be the ICGLR Regional Strategy for Comprehensive Durable Solutions for Refugees and Returnees (2027–2035) and its Action Plan, which will be submitted to Ministers for consideration and adoption. Their adoption is expected to translate regional commitments into nationally led action.

The Strategy is built on five complementary pillars: (1) national ownership and regional coordination; (2) solutions pathways; (3) legal identity, status and mobility; (4) strengthening protection and inclusion in local systems; and (5) economic inclusion, financial systems and social protection. It also promotes the participation of refugees and returnees in decisions affecting their lives and their access to education, healthcare, social protection, and livelihood opportunities.

According to UNHCR, in 2025 ICGLR Member States collectively hosted approximately 5.5 million refugees and asylum-seekers, while around 8.52 million refugees and asylum-seekers originating from ICGLR Member States were displaced worldwide. Approximately 4.56 million of these refugees and asylum-seekers remained within the region. These figures show the scale and protracted nature of displacement.

The Strategy responds to a recommendation adopted at the 2019 High-Level Ministerial Meeting in Kampala, Uganda. The ICGLR Secretariat led its development through a consultative process funded by the European Union and completed in partnership with the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), with technical support from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

The process involved Member States, refugee-led organisations, regional organisations, development partners, and United Nations agencies, under the guidance of the Regional Advisory Group on Comprehensive Durable Solutions. A Technical Experts' Meeting preceded the ministerial session on 26 November to consolidate recommendations. Through this initiative, the ICGLR and its partners seek to strengthen regional ownership, political commitment, and coordinated action towards sustainable solutions for refugees, returnees, and host communities.

About the ICGLR: The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is an intergovernmental organisation of 12 Member States that promotes peace, security, stability, and development in the region. Its Secretariat is based in Bujumbura.

About ReDSS: The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat is a coalition of NGOs and policy actors working to advance durable solutions for displaced populations in East Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes region.

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