



International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR)

THE KIGALI DECLARATION OF THE GREAT LAKES REGIONAL WOMEN'S MEETING

We, the delegates representing the core countries of the Great Lakes Region, namely Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia and the co-opted Republic of South Africa, assembled at the First Regional Women's Meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda from 7 to 9 October 2004, as part of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region under the auspices of the African Union and the United Nations;

- **Concerned** about the multi-dimensional conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, resulting in untold suffering of communities especially women and children and loss of human lives; Condemning all divisive ideologies and acts of genocide, massacres, terrorism, racism, ethnicity and all other forms of violence and crimes against humanity;
- **Further Concerned** by the increase of sexual and gender based violence, and especially the use of rape as a weapon of war and the repeated victimization of women through the physical, social and economic violations that result from these brutal acts;
- **Aware** that the continued insecurity contributes to the acceleration of the spread of HIV/AIDS especially among women and children, even as they continue to serve as primary caregivers and heads of household;
- **Conscious** of the reality that women continue to carry the heavy burden of conflict thus increasing their vulnerability and reducing their access to basic social, educational and health services;

- **Further** conscious of the deepening poverty and fragmentation of families, compounded by natural disasters and insecurity;
- **Concerned** about environmental degradation and its impact on health and development in the region;
- **Aware** of and concerned by the displacement (refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of huge populations and its attendant insecurities;
- **Concerned** by the illegal exploitation since the colonial period to date of the region's resources which impacts negatively on the security, development and rights of the people of the Great Lakes Region;
- **Further** concerned about the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and antipersonnel land mines in the region, despite efforts by respective governments and the international community to effect demobilisation, disarmament, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDRRR);
- **Concerned** that women's important roles in peace, security and development issues remain outside the mainstream of governance structures despite them being the majority of the population and their significant contributions and skills;
- **Aware** that in spite of commitments made to increase the number of women in decision making positions, women still remain marginalised;
- **Recognising** that though women have limited access to key factors of production, they remain major agricultural producers, workers, managers, traders, knowledge providers, and innovators;
- **Remaining** committed to our core values of respect for diversity, empowerment of communities and enjoyment of human rights by all peoples of the region;
- **Recalling** the principles enshrined in international conventions, various UN Resolutions and Declarations in particular United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- **Guided** by the African Union Declaration on Gender Equality and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights as well as the Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa adopted in Maputo (2003);
- **Cognisant** of the commitments in the Arusha, Lusaka and Pretoria Protocols and their Accords and their inadequate implementation;

- **Committed** to upholding the principles of democracy, transparency and accountable governance, gender equality and sustainable development;
- **Concerned** about the non respect of fundamental principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and non aggression;
- **Aware** of the existence of manipulation and exploitation of ethnicity for political and personal ends;
- **WE, THE DELEGATES TO THE GREAT LAKES REGIONAL WOMEN'S MEETING:**
- **Declare** our continued commitment to meaningfully contribute to the search for peaceful resolution of conflicts, justice, durable peace and stability for the Great Lakes Region
- **Affirm** our resourcefulness in organizing for peace, stability, security and sustainable development.
- **Reaffirm** our continued efforts to seeking ways and means of addressing impunity especially on gross violations of women's rights.
- **Call** on the Heads of State and Government to:
 - **enact** and enforce legislation that protects and upholds the human rights and dignity of women and girls;
 - **take** concrete measures to end the culture of impunity and enforce punitive action against perpetrators of crimes against humanity particularly genocide, massacres, rape and other forms of gender based violence;
 - **put** in place mechanisms and policies with a view to eliminating ethnics and exclusion;
 - **put** in place a regional mechanism with requisite resources to ensure women's equitable representation and effective participation in peace, governance and development processes at national and regional levels;
 - **provide** adequate resources for the effective implementation of all women and children's rights, peace and security instruments;
 - **fulfill** their roles and responsibilities towards all displaced persons within their borders and ensure the speedy enactment and adoption of national and regional policies on refugees and internally displaced persons;
 - **harmonize** national policies for the treatment, care and provision of services to victims of conflict, those affected or infected with HIV/AIDS

and other vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially women and children;

- **harmonize** national and regional policies on environmental protection for sustainable development;
- **implement** affirmative action for women at 50% minimum quota as set out by the AU at all decision making levels;
- **provide** access to both formal and non-formal education, health and other social services with special support to vulnerable groups;
- **mainstream** gender in legislation, policies and programmes; ensure the inclusion of gender perspectives in macroeconomic policies;
- **ensure** establishment of financial institutions and initiate investments to address gender inequality;
- **guarantee** economic opportunities for women to access credit and own property, including land;
- **negotiate** as a bloc on economic issues in order to protect women's interests from unfair trade policies and practices;
- **Call** on special commissions in charge of DDRRR to look into the specific needs of women ex-combatants, dependants of combatants and all vulnerable groups in reintegration and rehabilitation processes;
- **Urge** our respective governments to
- **accelerate** ratification of the AU Protocol on Women's Rights;
- **ensure** equal representation and participation of women at all meetings and consultation organised within the framework of the IC/GLR and other fora through:
 - Affirmative Action in the composition of each country delegation in line with AU guidelines;
 - ensuring effective involvement and participation of women's organisations and networks at these meetings.
- **institutionalize** the Great Lakes Regional Women's Forum as part of the IC/GLR, in partnership with the AU and the UN.
- **Call** upon women of the Great Lakes region to continue mobilising, networking and fostering dialogue within and between countries for peace, development and regional integration, and to maintain a coherent voice on gender issues.

- **Urge** suppliers, including the Western Powers, to end the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the region and to respect and fully implement the relevant Protocols and Agreements;
- **Further** urge for cooperation at regional and international levels in combating acts of terrorism and drug trafficking;
- **We** reaffirm our commitment and reiterate our readiness to contribute to the success of the IC -GLR in general and, in particular, to the promotion of peace-building, stability, economic development and regional integration, democracy, good governance, and to humanitarian and social issues;
- **We** convey our appreciation to the Heads of State and Government of the core countries, as well as the African Union, the United Nations, and the Group of Friends for recognising
- **the** role of women as partners in peace, security, economic development, regional integration, democracy and good governance, humanitarian and social issues.

Done in Kigali, 9 October, 2004