



## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

### DECLARATION OF NGOs OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION ON PEACE, SECURITY, GOOD GOVERNANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

We, the NGOs of the core countries of the Great Lakes Region, gathered in Arusha, Tanzania, from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004 in the framework of the preparatory process of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Good Governance, Economic Development and Regional Integration of the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), under the aegis of the African Union and the United Nations,

- **Recognizing** that peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region continue to be hindered by a multitude challenges;
- **Recognizing** further that armed groups, arms trafficking and small arms proliferation, lack of accountability of leadership, dysfunctional and non-sustainable nation states, cross-border looting of wealth, on-sided intra-regional movements of people and citizenship problems, prevalence of a culture of impunity, weak system of mass education, lack of creative market-consistent strategies to ascertain local ownership of the economy, contribute to the political instability, conflict and persistence of poverty in the region;
- **Concerned** by the increasing human poverty in the Great Lakes region, the critical humanitarian situation characterized by numerous IDPs, refugees in the region;
- **Convinced** that addressing the root causes of all these major sources of conflict would be a major contribution towards the achievement of the objectives of the dialogue. The proposed solutions include addressing the root causes of conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, DDR (i.e., demilitarization, demobilization and re-integration of excombatants), repatriation of refugees, resettlement of Internally

- **Displaced** Persons (IDPs), economic liberalization, designing viable economic development programmes (to guide short, medium, and long term development), feasible strategies to build economic infrastructure for development (including rehabilitation of infrastructure), promote regional integration and thereby observe principles of feasible regional integration;
- **Acknowledging** the importance of dialogue to achieve peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes Region and having identified challenges facing the countries of the Great Lakes Region, and making practical suggestions on how to resolve such challenges in the immediate, short-, medium and long-term perspectives;
- **Noting** that most of the regional peace, security and development instruments (treaties, agreements...) are not effectively applied by actors in the region and conscious of the need to revisit all peace agreements and assess the status of their implementation with a view of designing effective strategies and procedures for implementation of resolutions and monitoring of the implementation processes;
- **Strongly** welcome the joint UNAU initiative for an international Conference on the Great Lakes Region;
- **Mobilize** our own forces and launch an appeal to all critical segments of the civil society of the Great Lakes Region to work together and take our responsibilities for peace-building and regional development in the region;
- **Launch** a special and strong appeal to Heads of State and Government of the Great Lakes Region for an effective implementation of existing regional peace and development instruments (treaties, agreements... ) in order to ensure and consolidate the foundations for regional peace and security and to rejuvenate the process of economic development and regional integration;
- **Affirm** that in order to sustain and give impetus to the initiated dialogue within the civil society and across stakeholders groups, various platforms should be used to continue exchanging views (within the civil society, as well as among various stakeholder groups) and bridges should be build among stakeholders groups on the one hand, and partnership between the civil society and the government on the other;
- **Agree**, that in order to facilitate the process of integration of the civil society in the dialogue for peace, stability and development, to build a network or joint organ of NGOs in the Great Lakes Region that will facilitate regular meeting of NGOs and other groups of the civil society, in order to monitor progress;
- **Call** on all the stakeholders, and in particular the political leaders of the countries of the Great Lakes Region to approach the challenges facing the

region with an open spirit readiness, and political maturity, in order to reach consensus that will help in defusing the current situation of "no war no peace" prevailing in the region.

- **Reaffirm** our commitment and reiterate our readiness to contribute to the success of the IC/GLR in general and the building of peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes Region, in particular;
- **Extend** our warm thanks to the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation for its relentless engagement to promote peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes Region, and for co-ordinating and facilitating this historical meeting of the region' NGOs.
- **Adopt** the report of the Arusha NGO meeting here attached as our contribution to the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for the attention of the Summit of Heads of State and Government which is scheduled to take place in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, from 19 to 20 November 2004.

Done and Adopted in Arusha, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004.