



**Statement on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the International
Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR)**

In the First High-Level Officials Meeting

14-15 December 2021

Geneva-Switzerland

Presented by

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Deputy Executive Secretary of the ICGLR
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Excellency Chairperson

Distinguished Delegates.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to address you today in the name of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), I would like to convey the regards of Amb. João Samuel Caholo the Executive Secretary of ICGLR. In fact, this First High-Level Officials Meeting is another indication of the urgency that the international community places on the need to find durable and comprehensive solutions to the challenge relating to refugees and forced displacement.

Today's meeting is a landmark meeting; this meeting is a great opportunity to work with UNHCR to improve the protection of refugees and advance comprehensive durable solutions for refugees.

As you know the ICGLR is a regional intergovernmental organization with a large State membership. It is composed of the twelve member states: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Republic of South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia.

The ICGLR has a mandate on peace, security, and stability to harness development opportunities in the Great Lakes Region. The mandate is enshrined in the Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region signed in December 2006 and amended in 2012. This Pact serves as a legal framework of the ICGLR with the aim of creating the conditions for security, stability, and development between the ICGLR Member States. The Pact includes, four Programmes of action and ten thematic Protocols legally binding to Member States. The ICGLR also brings, an added value, in areas of Property Rights of Returning Persons, Prevention of the crime of genocide war crimes and crimes against humanity and all forms of discrimination, and gender-based violence in addition to IDP protection. Thus, ICGLR and UNHCR are pursuing mutually reinforcing mandates to address forced displacement in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This High-Level Officials Meeting is an opportunity to ensure that the eradication of statelessness is mainstreamed through the search of all durable solution for refugees. Statelessness can be the cause of forced displacement, but it can also be the consequence of forced displacement,

including for those in protracted situations. In line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) it is crucial that every individual including all refugees to have access to a legal identity documentation including birth certificates and nationality document for advancing sustainable solutions.

The ICGLR Secretariat has developed a robust regional statelessness policy framework. This has started in 2017 with the signature by the (12) ICGLR Member States of the Brazzaville Declaration on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes region.

Following the Brazzaville Declaration with its Action Plan on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region, the ICGLR Secretariat with UNHCR support achieved some significant results to eliminate statelessness in the region. This includes the nomination of the Government Statelessness Focal Points in the 12 ICGLR Member States as well as the adoption of common terms of references on their roles and the roll-out of a regional statelessness training workshop for the Government Focal Points and national ICGLR coordinators.

Furthermore, in April 2019, the ICGLR Secretariat with the Government of Kenya and UNHCR co-convened a Ministerial Conference on the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region in Nairobi. This conference aimed at preparing the High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019 marking the halfway point of the (I belong Campaign). Key achievements during this Conference include the agreement by all the ICGLR Government Statelessness Focal Points to extend the ICGLR Action

Plan on statelessness to 2024, and to expand it with a new strategic objective on access to legal identity documentation, including people at risk of statelessness such as refugees.

As of result of this ICGLR Conference, nine out of the 12 ICGLR Member States delivered (53) commitments at the 2019 High Level Segment on Statelessness at the ExCom in October 2019 in addition to pledges made by ICGLR Secretariat, and other organization totaling (78) pledges.

Following its pledge, the ICGLR Secretariat presented in November 2020 to the ICGLR Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC) the Consolidated Action Plan of ICGLR on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes (2017-2024) for endorsement.

Further to the said efforts in early 2021, the ICGLR Secretariat with UNHCR, launched a regional study on “Protracted Displacement, Statelessness and Durable Solutions”. The study builds on the pledges of the ICGLR Secretariat and Member States made in 2019, as well as the 2019 March Munyonyo Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting with the Ministers of ICGLR member states in charge of refugees in the Great Lakes region.

The flagship study reviews the situation of four ICGLR countries (DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania) hosting protracted refugees, to assess their risk of statelessness and review their prospects for durable solutions that

ensure access to legal identity documentation. This study follows a consultative approach with ICGLR Member States that will be done through a validation meeting expected in May 2022. The study report is expected to include practical recommendations for comprehensive durable solutions, based on analysis of the country legal framework and data collection collected with refugees in the said four countries.

In line with the 2019 March Munyoyo Outcome Document, the ICGLR Secretariat also pledged at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 to develop a Comprehensive Strategy for Durable Solutions for displaced persons in the Great Lakes Region and an action plan to implement the said strategy.” The ICGLR study currently undertaken with UNHCR will therefore inform the development of a comprehensive strategy for durable solutions for refugees. This strategy will comprise all the three durable solutions: voluntary return, local integration in host country as well as resettlement and complementary pathways. In line with ICGLR commitments to eradicate statelessness, ICGLR will pay particular attention that each solution permit to realize the right to a nationality, whether in the country of return or host country or a third country, by promoting access to birth certificates and nationality documents.

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me conclude this statement by stating that the development of comprehensive durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons in the region is a crucial to harness peace, security, and development in the Great Lakes Region and ensure access to proofs of legal identity for all. The ICGLR

Secretariat stands ready to reinforce its cooperation with UNHCR. The ICGLR Secretariat also wishes to work more closely with other regional organizations to create synergies to address forcibly displacement and eradicate statelessness. Therefore, the ICGLR Secretariat appeals to all participants to this first High-Level Officials Meeting to work together to create an enabling environment for ensuring protection and durable solutions for refugees that equally seek to eradicate statelessness.

Thank you and I wish you very fruitful deliberations.