



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

In the First Global Refugee Forum
17-18 December 2019
Geneva-Switzerland

Presented by

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Excellency Chairperson

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my distinct pleasure to make this statement at this First Global Refugee Forum . In fact this Global Forum is another indication of the urgency that the international community places on the need to find durable and comprehensive solutions to the protracted challenge relating to refugees and forced displacement.

The issue of forced displacement is even more critical when we note the impact on vulnerable women and children as a result of their displacement from their countries of origin. There is also the persistent challenge of availing all the necessary humanitarian and social services that they direly need. Additionally, though no fault of their own, host communities are also overburdened and

affected by these mass movement of vulnerable people into their fragile environments, despite their willingness to share the little they have.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Currently over 4 million refugees and asylum seekers originate from the Great Lakes region , moreover continued high levels of new forced displacement combined with the protracted presence of refugees in the region constitutes a source of tension and mistrust between neighboring countries of the region. As we all know, host governments labor as much as possible to abide by their obligation to offer protection to refugees, even in the face of meager resources, capacity challenges and security fears. It is therefore durable solutions to all these challenges, is of great importance.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) exerted efforts and made pledges to solve the problem of refugees in the Great Lakes region. One of these important pledges is made in Brazzaville on 16th October 2017, that is the Declaration on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region. In the said declaration the 12 Member States committed to carry

out a regional inception study to put in place a Regional Comprehensive Strategy on durable Solutions to address protracted refugee situations and risks of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region in close collaboration with UNHCR.

The ICGLR Member States made another pledge during the High Level Meeting for Ministers in charge of Refugees held in Munyonyo, Kampala, Uganda on the 7th of March 2019 . During the said meeting the Ministers agreed on the implementation of durable solutions for refugees: either through their voluntary safe and dignified repatriation ; their resettlement to third countries, their local integration in the respective host countries, or through other local solutions. The Ministers also agreed that this action requires greater political commitment, regional and international cooperation, and responsibility sharing.

The ICGLR Member States highlighted that voluntary return remains the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations. In this regard, the ICGLR Ministers in charge of refugees acknowledged the ongoing efforts and new commitments to establish Tripartite Commissions with the support of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The ICGLR Member States also

declared commitment to respect the voluntary nature of these returns and to invest in long-term efforts to ensure sustainable and dignified re-integration of returnees taking account of the needs of both returnees and the communities to which they return.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The ICGLR Member States agreed to to enhance their cooperation in pursuit of resettlement options within the region to ease the pressure on countries, which host a large number of refugees, in line with the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Problems of Refugees . The ICGLR also called for greater resettlement and international responsibility-sharing in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees of 17th December 2018. Furthermore the ICGLR encouraged traditional resettlement countries to consider increasing their annual resettlement allocations.

In conclusion and for the sake of reaching lasting solutions to the issue of forced displacement, the ICGLR is working to achieve the objectives of : prevention of violence and armed conflict which is the main driver and root cause of forced displacement. The ICGLR also aims at implementing local integration for protracted refugees and to progressively include them into national systems

as a key and viable durable solution. The ICGLR is exerting efforts with all partners, to develop socio-economic local integration plans benefiting host communities and refugees with the aim of creating win-win situation focused on local development, self-reliance and resilience.

Thank you very much

Merci beaucoup

Geneva 18th December 2019