JOINT STATEMENT OF THE ICGLR REGIONAL FORA AT THE 20TH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE REGIONAL INTER-MINESTERIAL COMMITTEE OF THE ICGLR

Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, The UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, distinguished delegates and representatives to the ICGLR and fellow partners in peace and development, Salutations

On behalf of the Joint Fora of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), We are deeply honored to speak before this 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC), here in the historic and vibrant city of Lusaka, Zambia. We extend our profound gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Zambia under the leadership of His Excellency President Hakainde Hichilema for their warm hospitality and for successfully hosting these critical statutory meetings.

Today, our region faces complex humanitarian and security realities that seem to glide on a fluid geopolitical landscape. Be that as it may, the collective presence of Member State Ministers and delegates here today reinforces our shared conviction that the challenges of the African Great Lakes Region can and will be resolved through our unified, practical, and multi-stakeholder action.

The ICGLR Fora of Parliaments, the Private Sector Forum, The Civil Society Forum, the Women Forum and the Regional Youth Forum exist to ensure the decisions of their Excellencies our Heads of State reach and inspire participation from our grassroot population and the voices of those various non-state stakeholders are returned to our official meetings.

Our work is made possible by the indelible contributions of the ICGLR network of partners and the resolute support of some member states. We thank the Office of the UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, GIZ cooperation, the Institute for Security Studies, UNFPA-ESARO, IMPACT and the European Union GOPA project among others.

Your Excellencies, The ICGLR Forum of Parliaments, wish to draw your attention to the Women's Parliamentary Conference on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region, scheduled for 2nd-5th November 2026 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Peace cannot be engineered in the absence of women nor can development be sustained if half of our population is marginalized from the peace architecture. This upcoming conference will serve as a high-level platform to address how legislative frameworks can better protect women in conflict zones and achieve implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 across our borders.

We therefore encourage all member states to support the conference and ensure their strong participation.

The ICGLR Fora also express our sincere appreciation to the United Republic of Tanzania for its efforts in hosting and operationalising the Civil Society Forum's Regional Secretariat in Arusha. The ICGLR Fora therefore requests this 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee to commend the United Republic of Tanzania in steps taken in hosting and operationalizing the Civil Society Forum because a regional secretariat gives a practical home for coordination, connection and collaboration of regional efforts.

Your Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, the ICGLR Private Sector Forum wish to emphasise a few key points. Firstly that our populations are more likely to appreciate the value of regional cooperation when they can feel it in their livelihood changes, jobs, markets, and the movement of goods and services.

For that reason, we call for more structured engagement between the Private Sector Forum and the Conference Secretariat to navigate how every measure is taken to achieve peace from a private sector front.

The Private sector forum also also commends and urges continued attention to the infrastructure and systems that make cross-border trade work but emphasize that infrastructure alone is not enough. We still need a shift in the mindset of our people from seeing our neighbours as competitors to recognising them as partners; from working in isolation to building regional value together; and from waiting for change to taking responsibility for it.

In this regard, we draw inspiration from the *Grow Zambia Agenda* and its emphasis on national development as the combined result of conscious actions by citizens and institutional leadership. Our progress must be built through the daily choices of individuals, businesses, communities and public institutions.

Your Excellencies, the ICGLR Women's and Youth Fora remind us that our work must be inclusive if it is to be lasting. The Youth and Women's full participation in the peace and security effort is essential to the resilience of our Societies to prevent and not be broken by conflict. Their ideas and energy should be reflected in the policies and opportunities that shape the region.

In this regard, the Fora wish to express their profound appreciation to the ICGLR Executive Secretariat for the successful formulation and launch of the 2nd generation Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (RAP II 2026–2030). The Secretariat's consultative process in developing RAP II provides us with the ideal framework to operationalize gender-inclusive peacebuilding.

Excellencies, regarding the Regional Youth Forum, the ICGLR has indisputably emerged as a continental best-practice example in the institutionalization of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda; driven fundamentally by the successful operationalization of the Youth Forum Secretariat thanks to the generosity of the people and government of the Republic of Kenya.

The next phase of progress in regard to the ICGLR's demonstrated leadership is the financial sustainability of the Youth Forum secretariat and we are positive that this RIMC meeting will emerge with instructive directions in this regard.

We are pleased to note the successful convening of the first bi-annual meeting of the Youth Forum Executive in June of this year, and we look forward to the scheduled second bi-annual meeting this December. These sessions serve as critical oversight mechanisms to align youth action with broader regional peace protocols.

However, institutional frameworks at the regional level must be mirrored by domestic policy and sustainability efforts. For this reason, we strongly urge Member States to accelerate the development of supportive national policy frameworks by formulating National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS.

We commend the Republics of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and South Sudan, who have already set the pace by successfully adopting their YPS NAPs.

We further note with encouragement that the Republics of Kenya, Zambia, and Uganda are actively proceeding with their formulation processes enabled in great part by the active participation and support of the ICGLR Regional Youth Forum and our partners.

In conclusion Honourable Ministers and distinguished delegates, the Fora stand ready to contribute. We are not here only to make recommendations; we are here to work with you, to support dialogue, strengthen partnerships and help turn shared priorities into practical action.

The resolutions of this 20th RIMC meeting should reflect the bold, integrated and multi-sectoral approach required to steer our region toward lasting stability.

We thank you for your leadership, your audience, and your continued partnership.

Thank you very much.

Asanteni sana.

19th October, 2026-Lusaka Zambia