



ASSESSMENT REPORT ON

“PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION”

A presentation to the 13th Ordinary Session of the Conference of Speakers
of the Member-Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great
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List of Acronyms

ADF	Alliance Defence Forces
AU	African Union
CAR	Central Africa Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
FP-ICGLR	Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
GLR	Great Lakes Region (African)
ICGLR	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
ICGLR MS	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region Member States
R-ARCSS	The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
UNSC	United Nations' Security Council
UN GLRSF	United Nations Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework
UNSCR	United Nations' Security Council Resolutions

Executive Summary

As is the practice, whenever an Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly of the Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) is held, a presentation on the theme of the year is made and discussed. Accordingly, this report is an assessment on the topic “Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region” which is the theme of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly of FP-ICGLR, presented to the 13th Ordinary Session of the Conference of Speakers as part of the Plenary Assembly. It is a follow up of the 12th Ordinary Session of Conference of Speakers which discussed Mechanisms for FP-ICGLR to Make Effective Contribution in the Resolution of Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region.

The report tries to provide an assessment on the use of Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. It therefore put forth options to identifying key strategic interventions and proposing future prospects to engage the FP-ICGLR and the Parliaments in the Region to further strategize the employment of parliamentary diplomacy in conflict resolution.

The report records exemplary cases where Parliamentary diplomacy has been a success. Such cases are those related to customary duties of Parliaments such as enacting laws, holding their Government’s accountable, the fight against corruption, promotion of human rights and by working on improving social services. Moreover, there are those cases where Parliaments got engaged in de-escalation of conflicts, and during the Post conflict or recovery periods. It also spells out situations where parliamentary diplomacy has faced challenges.

The paper analyses the current security situation in the Region with more emphasis on the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It captures the complexity of the nature of the Conflicts in the region, it also lays down challenges against the use of Parliamentary diplomacy in the Region. The paper incorporates the findings and proposes solutions to sharpen understanding on the roles Parliaments can play to contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in their respective countries and in the Region at large. The paper goes further to identify relevant policy frameworks and legal mechanisms to strengthen the regional parliamentary diplomacy for conflict prevention in the Great Lakes Region.

Guided by the pact¹ signed by the Heads of State and Government of the ICGLR Members in their 1st Summit held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, on 19th and 20th November 2004, which

¹ ICGLR, *Dar-es-Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region*, 20th November 2004,

contains the *Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region* as well as ten Protocols, four Programmes of Action and a Follow Up Mechanism adopted in 2006. Building on Protocol on Non-Aggression and Mutual Defence in the Great Lakes Region; this paper culminates by laying forth a draft resolution on Parliamentary Diplomacy for conflict prevention in the Great Lakes Region. This was ordered to equip the FP-ICGLR together with the Parliaments and Members of Parliaments with the information on the current situation and tools for Parliamentary Diplomacy for conflict prevention.

1. Introduction to The Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on Great Lakes Region FP-ICGLR

The Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) is an inter-parliamentary organization. It brings together parliaments of the twelve (12) ICGLR member States that include the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of South Sudan, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Republic of Zambia². It is a regional legislative body for the purposes of playing a regional role in the realization of the mandate of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The FP-ICGLR was established on the 4th December 2008 in Kigali, Rwanda, following the signing of the Inter-Parliamentary Agreement establishing it. Its Headquarters is established in Kinshasa, DR Congo.

1.1. An overview of the FP-ICGLR, General Objectives of the FP-ICGLR, Specific objectives

The general objective of the FP-ICGLR is to bring significant parliamentary contributions to the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region as signed on 15th December 2006. It is aimed at achieving the following specific objectives⁴:

- i. To provide a platform for exchange of experiences, conflict resolution and dialogue between the Parliaments of the member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;
- ii. To reinforce capacity building for the members of the Forum and the staff of the Parliaments of the member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in the fields of legislation, control of governmental action and representation of the people of the Great Lakes Region;
- iii. To support the efforts of Governments in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and to contribute to the consolidation of the peace processes and to national reconciliation;
- iv. To contribute to the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations on the respect and protection of the rights of women, children and vulnerable persons in periods of armed conflicts;

² J Goin, *Ethuro Calls for Dialogue in Dadaab Closure Debate*, Web, 15 April 2015.³ Inter-parliamentary Accords establishing the Forum ⁴<http://fpcirgl.org/en/objectives/>

- v. To promote democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, fundamental rights and freedoms and organization of free, fair, and transparent elections in the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;
- vi. To contribute towards the harmonization of national policies with the programmes of action, protocols, and projects prepared within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;
- vii. To ensure that all the protocols of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region are embedded in the national domestic legislation of the member countries;
- viii. To ensure that the national Parliaments of the member countries are fully involved in the evaluation and follow-up of the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region; and
- ix. To assist in resolving any conflicts that may arise between the Parliaments or between the member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

1.2. Key areas of intervention for the FP-ICGLR

The key areas of intervention for the FP-ICGLR as defined by its respective permanent committees include:

- a. Peace and Security;
- b. Democracy and Good Governance;
- c. Humanitarian and Social Issues;
- d. Economic, Natural Resources and Regional Integration;
- e. Gender, Children and Vulnerable Persons.

2. Research problem: assessment on Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region

The multifaceted nature of the conflicts, and violence plunging the Great Lakes Region, require a wide range of actors. National Parliaments play major roles in peacebuilding knowingly and unknowingly. Conflict resolution is categorised into three major phases namely; Preventive measures, Prevention of escalations, and Post conflict recovery measures. Most legislative organs play major roles in the prevention of conflict by enacting laws, by holding their government accountable, the fight against corruption, by promotion of human rights and by working on improving social services. Such programs play vital role in the prevention of conflict in their countries. It is not a surprise to ascertain that; in countries where Parliaments have the credibility of the people, those countries are relatively peaceful. Parliaments correspondingly can be useful in the de-escalation of conflict, and during the post conflict recovery. The main challenge that adversely affects the readiness of the parliaments in defusing conflicts is the unpreparedness, which includes lack of clarity on how and when to employ Parliamentary diplomacy in conflict prevention, conflict de-escalation, and Post conflict recovery.

3. Purpose of the Study

3.1. General Objectives

The overall objective of the study is to provide a detailed assessment on “Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region” with options to identifying key strategic interventions and proposing future prospects to curb Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region with the main focus on parliamentary diplomacy.

3.2. Specific objectives:

- a) Assess the conflicts and the security situation in the Great Lakes Region;
- b) Identify the role Parliamentary Diplomacy can play in Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region;
- c) Propose practical scenarios to support the Role of Parliaments of ICGLR Member States in Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region;
- d) Propose mechanisms for FP-ICGLR to effectively contribute to conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region;
- e) Propose resolution on Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

4. Justification of the Study

In a bid to resolve conflicts in Great Lakes Region, a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the Executive arm ICGLR member-states and other stake holders. In the same line, ever since it became operational in 2012, FP-ICGLR has been active in conflict resolution in the region mainly through undertaking research, conducting meetings and undertaking fact-finding missions with the approval of the Plenary Assembly of the organization. And whereas the Forum has made significant contribution in tackling conflicts within most member-states (intra-state) by constituting fact-finding missions whose recommendations and resolutions have been paramount in contributing to the resolution of the civil strife, it has not been able to do so in the eastern DRC due to the complex and complicated nature of the conflict that involves international players. Likewise conflicts between states (inter-state) remains a big challenge for the Forum due to the conventional thinking that resolution of such conflicts is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the executive branch of ICGLR member-states and is directly handled by the Summit of Heads of States of the mainstream ICGLR under the coordination of the ICGLR Conference Secretariat based in Bujumbura. The fore-mentioned scenario is similarly true for the Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in general.

It is because of the above realization that the topic “Parliamentary Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region” was chosen as the theme of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly of FP-ICGLR, to be presented and discussed by the Conference of Speakers as part of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly. It is a follow up of 12th Ordinary Session of Conference of Speakers which discussed Mechanisms for FP-ICGLR to Make Effective Contribution in the Resolution of Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region with a specific topic on the Role of Parliament in Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region;

5. Study methodology

To attain the objectives of this study, a rigorous desktop research based on the existing literature was carried out; and in order to have a wider perspective on current and past initiative of the Parliaments of the Member States of the ICGLR in the employment of diplomacy in the prevention, de-escalation and recovery of conflicts; well-structured and focused consultations with key people and experts on Parliamentary diplomacy were also conducted. Moreover, the study focused on understanding the legal mechanisms, and international instruments which provide for employment of Parliamentary Diplomacy in the ICGLR. Comments from the FP-ICGLR secretariat were as well collected and incorporated in this final report document.

The key findings, conclusions and recommendations were presented to the meeting of

FP-ICGLR stakeholders (Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the FP-ICGL MS) and ensured that relevant inputs were taken into consideration.

6. Scope of the study

The study incorporated several relevant literatures on the use of parliamentary diplomacy for conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region; and also identify relevant major roles to be played by national Parliaments and parliamentarians in pursuit of peace and stability. The overall conclusion of the work was to point out legal frameworks, roles and policy actions that National Parliaments and Parliamentarians may make use of in the efforts to strengthen their diplomacy for conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

7. Assessment of conflicts and insecurities in the Great Lakes Region

Literature on the history of conflict in the Great Lakes region is extensive. For the purpose of this discussion, a brief summary of the conflict in the region and its consequences will suffice, rather than an explicit description of the history of conflicts of respective countries in the Great Lakes region.

The peace and security in the Great Lakes Region have been challenged by the protracted violence perpetrated by illegal armed movements as well as electoral crises which have been causing significant challenges to civilians and the governments. The major insecurity and violent conflict is the ongoing acts of terrorism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the core of the genesis of the *fluidity* conflict of the DRC, are the exploitive policies of the colonial governments in Rwanda and Burundi. The policies protracted hatred and discrimination between the Tutsi and the Hutu ethnic communities, causing brutal violence after the end of colonialism. During the early 1990s in Rwanda, failed negotiations for the reparation of the Rwandese refugees led to guerrilla intrusions by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). In 1994, following the assassination of the president of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana; brutal violence erupted leading to the Rwandan genocide where approximately 800,000 victims were killed.³

The brutal scourge of the genocide in Rwanda caused an enormous spillage of refugees to the neighbouring countries. Extremist militia groups in refugee camps and former Rwandan army officers attacked Rwanda and Burundi, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) forces, allegedly with the support of the then DRC President Laurent Desire Kabila, launched an evacuation of refugees from the DRC that led to an attack from Rwanda and Uganda. These actions attracted the involvement and interest of other governments in the region (Uganda, Burundi, Congo, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad and Sudan) who supported sides of the conflict. Given the shifting interests of various governments and rebel groups, the fighting in the Congo, Rwanda and

³ Laremont Rene 2002.

Uganda has now continued over 15 years with only some short breaks of peace⁴. Such instability is exemplified by violent rebel groups and militias that are active across the Great Lakes region - such as the March 23, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), Islamic State/ADF affiliation and their supportive small armed groups.

7.1. The complexity of the DRC Conflict

The decades of violence in the DRC is rooted from fighting for natural resources, ethnic tensions, greed for power and the overwhelmed and incapacitated State organs to maintain the rule of law. The unspeakable poverty also renders the local people vulnerable to be manipulated by external actors who covet for the natural resources. DRC is rich in minerals, particularly gold, tin, tungsten and tantalum. The mentioned minerals are very strategic for the growth of technology whereas tantalum being central to the manufacturing of electronic devices, including the sophisticated communication devices.

The conflict in the DRC has many actors, some being locals, Regional and the international ones. These actors are categorised into two groups; there those who work to try to bring the situation into a bearable state, they are concentrated in finding solutions to the situation. On the other hand, there those who are on perpetration side; these actors are also both internal and external. The local perpetrator actors tend to be passive, meaning they operate under the influence of the external actors. Most of the local actors engage in ethnic identity conflict. The complexity of the conflict in the DRC is characterised by the involvement of the external perpetrators. Some of the external perpetrators play primary roles; they carry on massacres, looting, training of militias and other acts of terrorism. For instance, the Islamic State claimed credit for the bombing of the church in the North-Kivu which claimed lives of ten victims, on January 2023—<https://amp.dw.com/en/dr-congo-church-attack-kills-several-people/a-64398097>.

In 2022, unspeakable tension broke out between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Rwanda, which lead several alleged attacks by Congolese and Rwandan forces on each other's territory.

The current crisis is re-fuelled by the re-emergence of the Movement 23; an armed group which is allegedly accused to be supported by Rwanda. The DRC and the United Nations accuse Rwanda of not only supporting but actively fighting for the Movement⁵. On the other side, Rwanda and M23 have also accused the DRC of working together with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Both Congo and Rwanda deny

⁴ Nzongola Ntalaja, 2002

⁵ Reuters. June 13, 2023. Archived from the original on June 14, 2022, retrieved June 13, 2022

they support the FDLR and the M23 respectively contrary to the research and reports that confirm both sides allegations^{[6][7]}. The international community keeps calling for the two countries to adhere to the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region of the 2013.

7.2. Humanitarian Situation in the DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains one of the world's most complex and protracted humanitarian crises in the world. An estimated 26.4 million people are in need in 2023⁸. United Nation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) goes on to reporting:

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in DRC where the lives of millions of people remain difficult, particularly in the eastern provinces of the country, due to a volatile security situation and local community conflicts. Attacks against civilians, including internally displaced people (IDPs), have increased over the past year, especially in Ituri provinces. Today, more than 26.4 million people in DRC are facing severe and acute food insecurity, with nearly 5.7 million IDPs forced to move sometimes several times, and 500,000 refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries hosted in the country⁹.

7.3. Challenges to the realisation of lasting peace in the Region

Despite the progress made in building of a peaceful Region, the persistent intra-state conflicts, trans-border negative forces and terrorist threats are alarming as they affect the whole region. In fact, numerous complex threats to security and stability are more than ever before in the Great Lakes Region. The region continues to be a theatre for different armed groups operations. Perhaps, this situation is imposed by little or no capacity by the States to counter these threats from within and without. With decades of internal conflicts caused by intra- and inter-State based armed groups struggling for separation, and/or desire to access State power, and systematic absence of a coordinated approach among the State security agencies in fighting crime and threats to security, have grown to create enormous threats to lives and properties.

The overwhelming cycle of armed conflicts has rendered some ICGLR Member States with limited capacity to control their entire national territorial space, and in the process creating a phenomenon called distant decay from state authority. The receding of state

⁶ Etahoben, Chief Bisong (November 7, 2022). "Rwandan Soldier surrenders to UN in DR Congo". HumAngle Media. November 26, 2022

⁷ Bahati, Moise M. (November 24, 2022) "Rwanda: New footage suggests FDLR fighting alongside DR Congo Army". www.allAfrica.com

⁸ OCHA—<https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo-drc/about-ocha-drc>

⁹ Ibid

authority and control within territorial boundaries for some member countries has allowed the expansion of armed groups, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), establishment of transnational organized crimes syndicates, the spread of terror activities in the Great Lakes Region and mistrust and tensions due to the claims from some ICGLR MS accusing each other of recruiting and supporting the negative forces and acts of espionage; obstruct cooperation in the combating, and prevention of conflicts in the Region.

8. Role of the Parliamentary Diplomacy in conflict resolution in the GLR

Conflicts in the region are complex in nature and involve a wide net of actors, national and international. In situation such the ongoing violence in the DRC, it is not likely for the parliamentary diplomacy to achieve a substantial breakage of peace and tranquil. However still the Parliaments can make the use of diplomacy to reduce the effects of the conflict. None of the ICGLR MS's Parliament is not working, this means that these legislative organs have the capacity to influence changes in their respective countries. Parliamentary diplomacy can supplement government diplomacy because members of parliament can be more flexible when engaging in diplomatic activities. They are not after all, bound by the position taken by the government and can transcend their own government's interests by providing principled support for human rights¹⁰.

8.1. What is Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy has gained reputation as an alternative form of diplomacy though not thoroughly studied yet. The term was born out of the increasing of engagements of parliaments in foreign affairs and international relations. The term can be defined as "two or more parliaments conduct an ongoing dialogue with regard to key international issues"¹¹

8.2. Practical Scenarios to support Employment of Parliamentary diplomacy for conflict resolution in the GLR

8.2.1. Preventive diplomacy

Parliaments in the GLR exercise conflict preventive diplomacy as per their constitutional frameworks. Among the common actions that parliaments work on which fall under conflict preventive diplomacy are:

¹⁰ Parliamentary Diplomacy: diplomacy with a democratic mandate—Quebec Session 10-2012

¹¹ <http://www.agora-parl.org/resources/aoe/parliamentaryinstitution/parliamentary-diplomacy--page-2>, par 1

- i. Exercising vigilance of the rule of law;
- ii. Ensure that human rights¹² legislations are in place, up to date with prevailing international norms, effectively enforced and disseminated to constituents;
- iii. Ensure democratic alternation by establishing a transparent electoral system and reordering political party culture to accommodate increased participation of women, minorities and youth, with mechanisms to facilitate regular elections;
- iv. Ensure accountability and transparency, for Parliaments themselves as well other institutions to mitigate the risk of corruption and impunity.
- v. Passing legislations which protect the countries' natural resources and the employment opportunities for the citizens. Mineral conflicts can be deadly as it is evident in the Region. Such laws may prevent and when enforced may even de-escalate the conflicts and provide for ways for recovery and reforms. For instance, in Tanzania; in the year 2017, The Parliament passed series of legislations including the Natural Wealth and Resources (Permanent Sovereignty) Act¹³, 2017. These legislations granted power to the Parliament to review all arrangements or agreements made by the government, entailing the extraction, exploitation, or acquisition of natural wealth and resources including minerals. Among other things; the legislations provide frameworks for dispute management which of course is the best way to prevent conflicts from becoming deadly.

Experience shows that, though Parliaments in the countries which enjoy relative peace, work on conflict prevention, they however do not have concentrated efforts on peace and conflict prevention. These Parliaments need to develop a vision, formulate strategies, devise structures and marshal resources for the primary objective of consolidating peace—peace being not one goal among others but the goal¹⁴.

8.2.2. De-escalation diplomacy

While there not enough records on the application of Parliamentary diplomacy aimed at de-escalation of conflicts in the GLR; it is worth noting that there have been several attempts by the Forum of Parliaments of the Great Lakes Region. The FP-ICGLR has been active in conflict resolution in the region mainly through undertaking research, conducting meetings and undertaking fact-finding missions with the approval of the Plenary Assembly of the organization. And whereas the Forum has made significant contribution in tackling

¹² The role of Parliament in Conflict Prevention and Management in West Africa—Abidjan, 28th-30 October 2013

¹³ This Act declares permanent sovereignty of the People of the United Republic of Tanzania over all natural wealth and resources and provides with respect to exploitation of resources for the benefit of the people of Tanzania—*Gazette of the United Republic of Tanzania No. 27, Acts Supplement No. 5 of 7 July 2017*

¹⁴ The role of Parliament in Conflict Prevention and Management in West Africa—Abidjan, 28th-30 October 2013

conflicts within most member-states (intra-state) by constituting fact-finding missions whose recommendations and resolutions have been paramount in contributing to the resolution of the civil strife.

8.2.3. Recovery and rebuilding diplomacy

Post-conflict recovery Parliamentary diplomacy is possible where there is an existing peace agreement. The re-establishment of parliament itself may likely be the product of the agreement. During reconstruction process, parliaments play vital role to achieve National reconciliation and unity. A good example of the process, are the current affairs in the Republic of South Sudan. The ***Specialised Committee of Parliament on Peace and Reconciliation***¹⁵ worked hand in hand with other two institutions namely; *The Peace and Reconciliation Commission*, and *The Independent Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation* to support the dialogue process to end violence, and in the spirit of unity and reconciliation in building a collective future for all the people of South Sudan. The South Sudan Legislative Assembly furthermore played a key role in the post-conflict constitution making. The process sets an example of the use of Parliamentary diplomacy since such process is a delicate that requires broad-based participation of all stakeholders, peoples and political forces for there to be consensus amongst various actors¹⁶.

Other notable example of the post conflict Parliamentary diplomacy was clearly set forth by the Forum of Parliaments of the International Great Lakes Region. The FP-ICGLR organized a fact-finding mission¹⁷ in CAR May 2-3, 2019. The main objective of this mission was to assess the progress made in recent years and to determine the necessary strategies to support the efforts made by the leaders and the people of the Central African Republic, particularly the National Assembly of the Central African Republic, in the process of building lasting peace and national reconciliation.

FP-ICGLR organised a fact-finding mission from October 31 - November 2, 2019 to South Sudan¹⁸, to monitor and evaluate the progress achieved recently in the political, security and humanitarian fronts, including the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and the respect of the permanent cease fire. The Mission observed that there was a general

¹⁵ <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan-republic/joint-statement-south-sudans-peace-and-reconciliation-bodies>

¹⁶ <http://constitutionnet.org/news/out-time-full-enthusiasm-assessing-progress-and-hurdles-south-sudans-constitution-making>

¹⁷ Declaration of the Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) following the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Mission to Central African Republic On 2nd-3rd May, 2019

¹⁸ Final Communiqué of the Forum of Parliaments of the Member States of the ICGLR at the conclusion of the Parliamentary Fact-finding Mission in Juba, Republic of the South Sudan.

calm in the city of Juba, people freely go about their everyday life and public services are functioning normally. However, the Mission urged all parties to comply with the provisions of the R-ARCSS while developing a culture of mutual trust between the various stakeholders, a prerequisite for resolving the crisis and to reserve the progress already achieved in the process of consolidating a lasting peace in the country, notably the implementation of the R-ARCSS and the Permanent Ceasefire Agreement.

9. Mechanisms for the FP-ICGLR to effectively contribute to conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region

9.1. Regional legal framework for parliamentary diplomacy in conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region

Guided by the Pact¹⁷ on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region signed on 15 December 2006 by the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which came into force on 21 June 2008; the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Union Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other related frameworks corresponding to the implementation of the Pact. The Parliaments of the ICGLR MS have a solid legal ground to employ Parliamentary diplomacy in the prevention, resolution and mitigation of conflicts and security cooperation. The Pact contains the *Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region* signed by the Heads of State and Government of ICGLR Members in their 1st Summit held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, on 19th and 20th November 2004 as well as ten Protocols, four Programmes of Action and a Follow Up Mechanism adopted in 2006.

The Dar Es Salaam Declaration adopted by the 1st Summit of the Heads of States and Governments puts more weights on building a secure and developed region through their cordial renounce of the endemic conflicts in the region. The declaration says “deeply concerned about the endemic conflicts and persistent insecurity caused or aggravated by, inter alia, economic stagnation and poverty aggravation, mistrust and suspicion between governments, massive violations of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalisation, gender inequality, use of violence for conquering and conserving power, impunity of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, proliferation of armed groups, organised crime and illegal exploitation of natural resources”¹⁹.

¹⁹ ICGLR, Dar-es-Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, 20th November 2004 Chap.3, Article 17, p.8

The declaration created a platform for the formulation of best policies guiding principles, and programs particularly in the area of Peace and Security.

The 10 Protocols contained in the Pact are the following:

- i. Protocol on Non-aggression and Mutual Defence in the Great Lakes region;
- ii. Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance;
- iii. Protocol on Judicial Cooperation;
- iv. Protocol for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, WarCrimes and Crimes against Humanity and all forms of Discrimination;
- v. Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of natural Resources;
- vi. Protocol on the Specific Reconstruction and Development Zone;
- vii. Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women andChildren;
- viii. Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons;
- ix. Protocol on Property Rights of Returning Persons;
- x. Protocol on the Management of Information and Communication.

The Four Programmes of Action²⁰ to operationalise the 10 Protocols and Dar-es-SalaamDeclaration are as follows:

- i. Programme of Action for Peace and Security;
- ii. Programme of Action for Democracy and Good Governance;
- iii. Programme of Action for Economic Development and Regional Integration;
- iv. Programme of Action on Humanitarian, Social and Environmental Issues.

Other international legal instruments include The United Nations Charter²¹; the Universaldeclaration on Human rights;²² Security Council Resolutions such as 1325²³ on women peace and security,2389 (2017)²⁴ on Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, 1612 (2005)²⁵ on Children and armed conflict. The Constitutive Act of the African Union;²⁶ African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights;²⁷ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the

²⁰ ICGLR, *the Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region*. December 2006 amended November 2012

²¹ The United Nations Charter

²² Universal Declaration on Human Rights

²³ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2006/1/cedaw-and-security-council-resolution-1325-a-quick-guide>

²⁴ <https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/resolution/security-council-resolution-2389>

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/security-council-resolution-1612-2005-on-children-and-armed-conflict/>

²⁶ https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf

²⁷ <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights>

Child;²⁸ African Youth Charter;²⁹ The African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact;³⁰ etc.

9.2. Proposed actions that the FP-ICGLR may employ for conflict prevention, de-escalation/mitigation and conflict recovery

Conflicts and differences should be resolved through peaceful means, such as mediation and inclusiveness. It is of undeniable fact that political plurality and dialogue are imperative if peace and security are to be achieved. Respecting each parties' differences is the foundation to achieve unity. The FP-ICGLR and the National Parliaments should be at the heart of conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation and peacemaking processes. MPs can lead the way in showing how to work together across political, cultural or religious divides, and in engaging in constructive dialogue as a means to settle disputes.³¹

- i. FP-ICGLR as well as the FP-MS should formulate and/or strengthen their **Strategy for peace building and conflict resolution**, basing their strategic planning on the frameworks provided by the Inter-parliamentary Accord³² article 2(3) "To support the efforts of Governments in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and to contribute to the consolidation of the peace processes and to national reconciliation;" and article 2(5) "To promote democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, fundamental rights and freedoms and organization of free, fair, and transparent elections in the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;"
- ii. By the use of the respective Member States' constitutions and laws; the Parliaments and Members of Parliament **should strategically** exercise their vigilance duty to ensure checks and balances to the rule of law, as part of their government oversight mission; ensure that human rights legislation is in place, up-to-date with prevailing international norms, effectively enforced and disseminated to constituents; ensure that their own governance provides a model that adheres to democratic principles, respects the rights of minorities and the underprivileged and reflects a pluralistic, inclusive society; ensure accountability and transparency, for parliaments themselves as well as other institutions, to reduce the risk of corruption; ensure that institutions are strengthened so as to regenerate public confidence; ensure democratic alternation by establishing a transparent electoral system and reordering

²⁸<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-rights-and-welfare-child>

²⁹<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>

³⁰<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-non-aggression-and-common-defence-pact>

³¹ <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/peace-building/conflict-prevention-peacebuilding-and-reconciliation>

³² The founding instrument of the FP-ICGLR

- political party culture to accommodate increased participation by women, youth and minorities, with mechanisms to facilitate regular elections³³.
- iii. **Increase collaboration between the governments and Community/traditional institutions:** Parliaments and Members of Parliaments should endeavour to inculcate in their ***Strategy for peace building and conflict resolution***, programmes which create working relationships with community traditional leaders to understand their issues and causes of tension, and distress. Traditional/community leaders are respected and trusted by the societies they lead. Working with such leaders may be a good source for conflict prevention. Institutions such as religions, business associations, transportation associations, pastoralists, miners, etc. may assist in understanding the dynamics of the conflict thus pave a sure way to resolve or prevent conflict from escalating into violence.
 - iv. **Public awareness campaigns:** Parliaments may use the legitimacy accorded to them by the public to conduct outreach campaigns, in conflict prone communities in order to enhance their knowledge of the possible causes of conflict in such communities. Parliaments may employ diplomacy to engage disputing parties to find solutions to their existing challenges to peace and security.
 - v. **Deter extremism and radicalisation process in respective constituencies:** by devotion and commitment to nurture reasoning, respect for diversity, sound patriotism, and respect for human dignity; Members of Parliament by virtues become defenders and protectors of the society. By using their legitimacy as defenders, the Parliaments are able to deter and combat radicalisation and bring to the open hidden agendas of the recruiters of sinister and terror groups.
 - vi. **Dealing with the question of Leadership:** FP-ICGLR, Parliaments, and Members of Parliaments may consider establishing leadership incubation programs aimed at nurturing patriotic virtues, capacitating youth with leadership skills, state- crafting skills and developmental skills in order to answer the quest for good leadership in the region.
 - vii. **FP-ICGLR** should consider establishing a practical training program on conflict resolution and conflict prevention. The training should be geared to equip the members of Parliament with skills to identify, analyse, and plan for prevention, resolution or recovery. To begin with; this study proposes that the FP- ICGLR

³³ The role of parliament in conflict prevention and management in west Africa Regional Conference organized jointly by the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

reaches out to the United State Institute for Peace, to establish negotiations on the establishment of the capacity building program.

9. Conclusion

Throughout this report, the emphasis has been placed the role of Parliamentary diplomacy for the resolution of the endemic conflicts plunging the Region. The emphasis was as well put on the necessity of the FP-ICLR and the National Parliaments to strategically put plans and programs aimed at conflict resolution. The report also underscored the need for a structured practical training programme to build or strengthen the capacity for conflict resolution among members of Parliaments.

Members of Parliaments as leaders and speakers of the people; should find it obliging to find out where their followers are, and where they deserve to be; and not necessarily where they desire to be. They should immerse themselves to learn of the issues and challenges facing their people. Conflict prevention and Conflict Resolution is not a one-day job, and cannot be done in an office alone, or during campaigning time, NO. It is a process that require proximity follow-up. It is high time for Parliaments to solidify their stand on Peace.