



SECOND PARLIAMENTARIANS CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION



**Club du Lac Tanganyika,
Bujumbura, Burundi,
from MARCH 3rd to 4th 2008.**

**2nd PARLIAMENTARIANS CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

3-4 MARCH 2008

HOTEL CLUB DU LAC TANGANYIKA

BUJUMBURA - BURUNDI

I. Introduction

1. The 2nd meeting of Parliamentarians of the Great Lakes Region, organised by the Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in collaboration with the National Assembly and the Senate House of Burundi together with the Association of Western Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), was held at Club du Lac Tanganyika, Bujumbura, Burundi, from 3 to 4 March 2008.

2. The meeting was attended by Parliamentarians from the eleven Member States and co-opted countries of the ICGLR, AWEPA; the Group of Friends of the ICGLR; UN Agencies and the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi; Representatives from East African Legislative Assembly and Amani Forum, as well as Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to Burundi.

The list of participants is herewith attached

II. Objectives of the Conference

3. The objectives of the 2nd Inter- Parliamentary Conference convened a year after the signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development of the Great Lakes Region by Heads of State and Government were as follows:

- Promoting the role of parliamentarians of the ICGLR Member States in the implementation of the Pact on Security, stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region;
- Assessing the status of ratification and domestication of the Pact and its protocols;
- Consideration of the establishment of a Regional Parliamentarians Forum

III. Opening of the meeting (Agenda item 1)

4. The official opening ceremony was graced by His Excellency, Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi. In his opening speech, he welcomed participants on behalf of the Government and the people of Burundi, and indeed on his own behalf and expressed gratitude to the organisers of the meeting. He thanked the participants for having spared time for this important event and wished them a pleasant stay in Burundi.

5. The President particularly thanked the Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, Ambassador Liberata Mulamula for the initiative to organise this conference in Burundi. He reaffirmed his commitment to the noble cause of the International Conference on Great Lakes Region as a reliable way to foster peace and development in a region that has been characterised by crises, poverty and conflicts.

6. The President urged Member States to take the Pact and its Protocols not as option but as the only strategy to foster harmonious peace, security and development in the Great Lakes Region. He said this would pave the way to improve the livelihoods of the population who for a long time have been victims of insecurity, political instability, hunger and poverty. He informed the delegations that Burundi was the first country to ratify the Pact and deposit the Ratification Instruments to the Executive Secretariat of the ICGLR. He added that Burundi's contribution to the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development was underway and urged other governments to contribute in a concerted effort. He reaffirmed Burundi's commitment and confirmed that contributions were made for the next 5 years towards the functioning of the Conference Secretariat.

In conclusion, H.E President Nkurunziza reiterated his country's commitment to promote justice and security, the aspiration to have a democratic nation that protects the lives of the population and individual security.

7. Before the official opening speech by H.E. President Pierre Nkurunziza, several speakers including the Speaker of the Senate House, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Burundi, the Vice-President of AWEPA and the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region had taken the floor to welcome the participants.

8. In his welcoming speech, the Speaker of the Senate House of Burundi, Honourable Gervais Rufyikiri welcomed the various delegations and wished them a pleasant stay in Bujumbura. He urged the participants to find time in spite of their busy schedule to visit the various attractions that this beautiful country had to offer.

9. The Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, in her opening remarks expressed her appreciation for the work accomplished by Member States since the signing of the Pact, a year ago. She informed the delegates that seven countries had ratified the Pact, although rules of procedure required that 8 countries should ratify before its entry into force. She was however confident that there would soon be ratification of the Pact by all Member States.

10. The Executive Secretary indicated that despite the fragile nature of the Great Lakes Region, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region was happy to note that dialogue, peaceful negotiations and agreements had just been concluded in Kenya and previously in D R Congo. She urged parliamentarians to chart out ways in which they can be involved and engaged in the ratification and implementation of the protocols.

11. The Speaker of the Burundi National Assembly, Honourable Pie Ntavyohanyuma, in his speech underscored the importance of parliament in fostering peace, security and stability in order to change the course of events in the Great Lakes Region from an area of conflict and poverty to a land of peace and development. He was happy to note that the presence of the delegations from the Member States clearly demonstrated the willingness and commitment of the governments of the region towards the implementation of the Pact on Stability, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

12. The Speaker expressed hope that this meeting would be a great opportunity to concretise one of the objectives foreseen in the Programs of Action of the Pact, and to learn about the establishment of a Regional Parliamentary Forum of the ICGLR. He equally expressed hope that the meeting would be an opportunity to discuss effective methods of solving the problems of the region in regard to security, peace, stability and development.

13. In his speech, the Vice - President of AWEPA, Mr. Luc Dhoore explained the role his organisation had played in raising funds to finance the parliamentarians meeting of the Great Lakes Region. He thanked the Belgium government for the financial support. He underlined the importance of the Pact as an instrument of hope for the people of the region. He called for a strong political will in the ratification and

implementation of the Pact. Besides the involvement of Parliamentarians, the Vice - President of AWEPA highlighted that the presence of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Burundi was a clear testimony of the country's commitment to the Pact and an encouraging gesture for members of Parliament and other elected leaders.

IV. Plenary Session

14. Election of the Bureau (Agenda item 2)

The Bureau was elected as follows:

Chairman: Burundi (The Speaker of Senate, Hon. Gervais Rufyikiri)

Vice-Chairman: Sudan (Hon. Al – Amin Dafa Allah)

Rapporteur: Kenya (Hon. Cyrus Jirongo)

15. Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting adopted the attached Agenda without amendment (See Annex)

V. Deliberations

15. During the two-day meeting, various presentations were made as per agenda items, summaries of which appear here below. The presentations provided an opportunity to adequately inform Parliamentarians of the Great Lakes Region of the role that parliamentarians can play in the implementation of the Pact, assessing the status of ratification and domestication and elaborate on the strategies for the establishment of a Regional Parliamentarians Forum.

16. The role of Parliamentarians in the Implementation of the Pact (Agenda Item 3)

The Programme Officer in the Conference Secretariat in charge of Democracy and Good Governance, Mr. Silas Sinyigaya, in his presentation under this agenda item, explained the genesis of ICGLR, its objectives and the process leading to the signing of the Pact. He recalled that the region was characterised by violence, wars and conflicts, a culmination of which was the genocide in Rwanda that left one million people dead and thousands of people homeless. He also referred to the conflict in D R Congo, Uganda, Kenya and other countries of the region experiencing security lapses. He elaborated that the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region were of a similar nature and demanded a regional and holistic approach to resolve them, hence the ICGLR initiative. In this regard, he proposed a coordinated approach to problem solving through establishment of complementary approaches that can be made through partnerships with Member States and other stakeholders.

The presentation outlined the structure and background of the Pact and Forum, including mechanisms for the implementation of the Pact. Also highlighted were the Programmes of Action including the 10 protocols under the four pillars namely, Peace and Security, Good Governance and Democracy, Economic Development and Regional Integration, as well as Humanitarian and Social Issues. The Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development was explained and the role of the Secretariat clarified. The mission and vision of the ICGLR including its added value were highlighted.

The Officer also elaborated on the role of Parliamentarians in promoting the Centre for Democracy and Good Governance to be based in Lusaka.

17. Modalities for the Establishment of a Regional Parliamentary Forum and domestication of the Pact (Agenda item 4).

Under this agenda item, presentation was made by the Member of Parliament of Rwanda, Hon. Ambassador Valence Munyabagisha. He focused on the Protocols contained in the Pact particularly on Democracy and Good Governance as the main pillars for strengthening peace, security, stability and development. He emphasised that the 2007 Kinshasa Declaration of the Great Lakes Region Parliamentarians was based on the above pillars. One of the other pillars was on cross-cutting issues.

The presenter proposed a Regional Forum governed by a charter with two sessions a year on rotational basis where parliamentarians and observers take part in the sessions. He proposed that the source of funding would be from individual country contributions, bilateral donors and other well-wishers. He further proposed establishment of a Permanent Secretariat for the Forum assisted by 4 professionals for each of the clusters and based in one of the Member States' Parliament.

In his presentation, the Consultant, Mr. Gervais Gatunange observed that this was an ambitious but imperative Pact in achieving peace, security, stability and development. He indicated that the regional Forum would have an extended mission in the implementation of the objectives of the Pact, through the ICGLR. He proposed the composition of the Forum as follows:

- President (Chairman)
- Vice – President (Vice-Chairman)
- Secretary General
- Representatives from each country

He proposed a term of office of two years non-renewable with at least one meeting every year. However the Executive Committee would meet twice a year. The Forum would be in charge of the implementation of the Pact guided by four commissions which would be in charge of the 4 pillars of the Pact, resources permitting.

He further proposed that the Secretariat should be based at the Headquarters of the ICGLR, with a National Coordination Mechanism of the Pact. Members of Parliament would have an important role to play in this process as they are entrusted with legislative powers.

18. Presentations by Member States on the Status of Implementation and Ratification of the Pact (Agenda item 5)

Under this agenda item, Representatives from Member States provided an update on the status of implementation in the respective countries.

Burundi

The representative of the Republic of Burundi informed the meeting that:

- Burundi was the first country to ratify the Pact.
- Members of the Senate House were sensitised.
- Civil society meetings were also used as an opportunity to sensitise the stakeholders.
- Awareness campaigns were done through distribution of T - shirts that were printed through the National Coordination Mechanism.

Central African Republic

- The country has ratified the Pact and is in the process of implementation and domestication of the Pact;
- A national mechanism for follow up was set up in the country;
- Sensitisation seminars were organised together with Members of Parliament as part of the awareness campaign;

- Open debates were in progress to highlight the importance of the Pact;
- Follow up conferences were organised to evaluate the progress;

Democratic Republic of Congo

- Has ratified the Pact and is in the process of depositing the Instruments of Ratification;
- Political instability, civil wars and genocide resulted into displacement of people and proliferation of light weapons in the region;
- After the International Conference, a national peace conference was organised in the Democratic Republic of Congo to sensitise people;
- During the last Regional Inter- Ministerial Meeting (RIMC), D. R. Congo released its contribution for years 2007-2008. In addition, 1m dollars has been paid into the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development, as pledged during the signing of the Pact.

Kenya

- Ratification was done, domestication has not yet been done, but will commence as soon as domestic issues have been resolved;
- The pledge of 1m US dollars will be made during May 2008 meeting and this would be released to the Secretariat before the end of 2008.

Rwanda

- The Pact was ratified in July 2007;
- The ratification instruments were submitted to the ICGLR Executive Secretariat;
- The National implementation Mechanism has been set up;
- Rwanda Parliament initiated working documents on the establishment of a regional Forum of Parliaments;
- The Pact is being mainstreamed in the national legislation;
- A National mechanism for coordination was established;
- The Pact, the protocols, as well as the Dar- es- Salaam Declaration have been translated into the local language and disseminated to the stakeholders;

Challenges

- One more country is still required to ratify the Pact before its entry into force;
- Funding remains a pre-requisite;
- Understanding of the process by the population;

Way forward

- Continued advocacy
- Establishment of a Regional Forum of Parliaments
- Awareness campaigns

Sudan

- After the Kinshasa meeting, a report concerning the Pact was submitted to Parliament. The Ministry of Justice considered the Pact and Protocols and recommended it for ratification and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs forwarded the same to the Cabinet for approval and subsequent ratification by Parliament;
- After ratification, it will be incorporated under the laws of the Sudan;

Tanzania

- The Pact has gone through various bodies that are necessary for its ratification;
- Tanzania Parliament was expected to debate the draft in the Parliamentary session in January; however the Pact was not tabled because of the political environment that brought about the dissolution of the Cabinet;
- The government has promised to submit the bill in April 2008. There is hope that it will be subsequently ratified;

Uganda

- Uganda has ratified and deposited the Instruments of Ratification with the ICGLR Executive Secretariat;
- Paid contributions for 2007;
- A National Coordination Mechanism for implementation is in place;
- Sensitisation of the parliament is in progress;
- Plans to domesticate the Pact through the foreign affairs committee is under way;
- Plans have been made to pay contributions for the 2008;
- Planning to sensitise the other stakeholders;

Zambia

- The President signed the Pact and the Cabinet endorsed it as a way of ratification;
- Parliament is not required to ratify the Pact and protocols but is informed by the Executive;
- Preparation is in place to deposit the Ratification Instruments with the Executive Secretariat;
- Set up National Coordination Mechanism that has been recognised by cabinet as a best strategy for the implementation of the Pact;
- Zambia feels honoured to host the Centre for Democracy and Good governance in Lusaka and the premises have been identified;

20. African Peer Review Mechanism: A New Approach to Strengthening Governance in Africa: The Potential Role of Parliamentarians (Agenda item 7)

In his Presentation, Mr. Kojo Busia of UNECA underlined the importance and uniqueness of the African Peer Review mechanism. He presented the political vision of the mechanism and explained that it shifts paradigms from principles of Sovereignty and Non- Interference to the principles of Non- indifference to the problems facing African countries as a whole and the Great Lakes Region in particular.

The presentation outlined the objectives of the African Peer Review Mechanism, scope, frequency of the review, process, the structure, the challenges and its added value to bringing peace and security to the region.

The general discussion and reactions indicated that parliamentarians have a role to play in monitoring and controlling the government action. As to the voluntary nature of the African Peer Review Mechanism others were of the view that it should be made mandatory with punitive judicial measures for non-compliance. Nevertheless the Presenter was of the view that the mechanism is democratic in the sense that it does not force countries to sign to it and does not need to instil punitive measures for countries that have not yet been reviewed. Emphasis was put on the need for system-wise institutionalisation of the mechanism such that it is not abandoned when governments change.

There was general consensus that members of parliament should continue to be involved in the African

Peer Review Mechanism and encourage their respective countries to consider the process as a monitoring and evaluation tool.

The meeting recommended that member States should seek representation in the panel of experts for APRM.

21. Group Discussions on Modalities of Operationalisation of the Regional Parliamentarians Forum

The meeting convened in two informal working groups to consider the various proposals on the establishment of a Regional Parliamentarians Forum

The following are the major points that were noted in the plenary after the discussion:

- Leadership: It was proposed that leadership of the Forum would include the Chair(a country hosting the meeting) whose term of Office would be one year, Vice-Chair who would be the next Chair or host so as to maintain continuity;
- The need for the Executive Committee to meet twice a year;
- The number of representatives at the forum was agreed at 5 for countries with one chamber and a maximum of 6 for countries with two chambers;
- The gender issue was also discussed and it was agreed that 30% representation be reserved to women for the country's delegations;
- A follow - up committee under the Chairmanship of Burundi comprising of one representative from each of the 11 Member states be established to finalise the modalities for setting up the Forum.
- Member States should be encouraged to ratify and implement the Pact;
- The relationship between other Forums and that of the IC/GLR would be complementary;
- The need for partnership and collaboration with existing Regional Organisations whose representatives would attend the meetings of ICGLR as observers.
- Resolutions of the Forum to be presented at the Heads of States Summit;
- Any declaration should include recommendations;

22. Date and Venue of the Next Meeting (Agenda item 7)

The meeting agreed that the next meeting should be held in Kigali, Rwanda.

23. Miscellaneous (Agenda item 8)

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

24. Review of the Security Situation in Member States

The Parliamentarians also used the occasion to brief each other and review the security situation in their respective countries. The meeting highlighted the oversight role of Parliamentarians in conflict prevention and in ensuring that the agreements on peace and security are adhered to.

25. Adoption of the Report (Agenda item 9)

The meeting adopted the Bujumbura Declaration which includes recommendations on the way forward.

The Bujumbura Declaration is herewith attached.

26. Closing Session (Agenda item 10).

The closing ceremony was graced by the first Vice - President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency

Yves Sahinguvu.

Before the official closing speech by the Guest of Honour, the Chair of the Meeting and Speaker of the Burundi Senate, Honorable Gervais Ruffyikiri delivered his closing remarks. He appreciated the in-put and deliberations provided during the two days of the meeting. He expressed his gratitude to all those who in one way or another contributed to the organisation and success of the meeting. He particularly paid tribute to AWEPA, the ICGLR, and to all the participants for accepting to attend the meeting. He indicated that the meeting provided an opportunity for participants to consider the role of parliaments in the implementation of the Pact and its Protocols, the progress made in the ratification and implementation, as well as the importance of APRM in conflict prevention and resolution.

The Speaker reiterated that the future of our generation depends on efforts made and work accomplished, particularly by Parliamentarians who are in a position to establish an enabling environment for peace and development. He urged the delegates to implement the recommendations therein, considering that the populations of the Great Lakes Region were in dire need of Peace and Security.

The Co-Chair of the Group of Friends, Ambassador Ed Craanen, in his remarks highlighted that the Pact signed in Nairobi was a useful tool for bringing appreciable changes to the region. He noted with appreciation, some positive developments in the region including the Goma Agreement.

He explained that the key to successful implementation of the Pact lies in principles of ownership, partnership and inclusiveness. He expressed his hope that the countries that have ratified the Pact would ensure its incorporation in the national legislation. He urged for commitment to the implementation of the Pact and indicated that countries needed to show their commitment by honouring their country contributions.

Ambassador Craanen reiterated that the provisions of the Pact should be taken seriously in settling disputes and that Regional Cooperation was very important in bringing about peace as witnessed in the case of Europe. He affirmed their role as political and diplomatic envoys of the International Secretariat of the Great Lakes Region and that regional cooperation could only be sustained if it is broadly supported by parliaments who are a true representation of the voices and needs of the people. The involvement of parliamentarians was therefore important in order to bring the process closer to the people.

He further mentioned four tasks that the Group of Friends was charged with:

- To speak with a collective voice
- To speak and act in favour of the conference (advocacy role)
- To further dialogue with stakeholders
- To support the implementation of the Pact

He concluded by expressing special gratitude to the Executive Secretary, Ambassador Liberata Mulamula for her appreciable role both at national, regional and international levels.

In her closing remarks, Amb. Liberata Mulamula first of all extended special thanks to the First Vice - President of Burundi, H. E Yves Sahinguvu who accepted to preside over the closing ceremony in spite of his busy schedule, the Speaker of the Burundi Senate who chaired the meeting, as well as the Senate and National Assembly of the Republic of Burundi for their commitment and support to IC/GLR.

She noted that the Parliamentarians conference was of a remarkable success and of a historical significance. She indicated that there had been commitment to the highest level, as demonstrated by the presence of H.E the President of the Republic of Burundi, the First Vice - President, the Speakers of the Senate and National Assembly and all the Parliamentarians and the people of Burundi.

She expressed her confidence that the Pact would soon enter into force and that implementation of protocols and programs could start.

The Executive Secretary further explained the role that Parliamentarians can play in monitoring the Government action. In so doing, they were expected to play the role in a transparent manner. She urged Members of Parliament to encourage their respective countries to accede to the ARPM.

Vote of Thanks

Delivering the vote of thanks, **Hon. J. Michelle of the DRC** expressed appreciation of his country for being given the opportunity to host the first Regional Parliamentarians meeting of the ICGLR in February 2007. He expressed his gratitude to the people of Burundi for the warm welcome extended to the various delegations, which not only demonstrated the good relationship existing between the countries of the ICGLR but also their commitment to the Pact and its Protocols.

Closing speech by the First Vice - President of the Republic of Burundi, H.E Yves Sahinguvu

In his closing speech, His Excellency the First Vice- President noted with pleasure that the presence of delegations from the various countries was a testimony of the commitment and wish for the respective countries to get rid of conflicts. He expressed his special thanks to the countries that had ratified the Pact, as they had shown a commendable example. He indicated that the meeting had shown the important role that parliaments could play in the domestication of the Pact. He emphasised that the leadership of the Region should be tasked to provide mechanisms for conflict resolution, and urged Members of Parliament to keep in mind the various recommendations made during the meeting, and to sensitise their respective Governments on the importance of the Pact, and the need for speedy ratification of the same.

His Excellency Yves Sahinguvu closed the meeting wishing all the participants a safe trip home with the hope that recommendations made would be rapidly implemented.

27. Conclusion

The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. The participants thanked the Government and people of Burundi for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to all delegations. The meeting welcomed the offer by Rwanda to host the next Parliamentarians meeting and all looked forward to the launching of the Parliaments Forum of the Great Lakes Region.

Done in Bujumbura, 7th March 2008

