

# **DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## **RELIGIOUS LEADERS REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

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**METHODIST GUEST HOUSE  
NAIROBI, KENYA**

**11<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2004**

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RELIGIOUS LEADERS REGIONAL CONSULTATION  
ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
THE GREAT LAKES REGION

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### PREAMBLE

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**We, Religious leaders meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

**Commissioned to:** Instruct, Refute falsehood, Correct Error and Give Encouragement with Patience, realising that being religious does not exempt us from social responsibility,

**Noting** that Greed, Injustice, Selfishness and Falsehood have been the **principal** causes of conflict in our region,

**Wishing** to see the region transformed from its current violent ridden state, into one where peace is allowed to thrive and injustice is not tolerated,

**Willing** to support all efforts made towards restoring peace in the region,

**Basing** our deliberations on our common spiritual principles of Truth, Justice and Peace,

**Affirming** the right to life, liberty, freedom and economic justice for all,

**Upholding** the principle of the sacredness of human life and preservation of human dignity And Further, recognising the African principle of *Ubuntu*,

**Promoting** the resolution of conflicts in a non-violent manner through peaceful dialogue and inclusion of all peoples – ethnicity, gender, religious and political affiliation notwithstanding.

**While recognising** that the tendencies of corruption, injustice and violence are deeply rooted in human society and no external law as such will uproot them, that we need *the grace of God* to overcome these,

**Are convinced** that dialogue, mutual assistance and promotion of justice are a prerequisite for lasting peace in the Great Lakes Region. **Request** an opportunity to make an input at every level of the International conference.

**Make the following recommendations for *consideration* and *adoption* by the summit.**

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## BACKGROUND

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1. Since 1994 the idea of an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region has been on the agenda of the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU). This intent became a reality with the appointment of: a United Nations Special Representative to the Secretary General in the Great Lakes Region and an African Union special envoy to the Great Lakes Region in charge of spear-heading the preparatory process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR). To ensure that the views articulated in the conference are all-inclusive, the United Nations and the African Union have exhorted the State actors to open the conference to input from all sectors including Faith Based organisations, Women, Youth groups and civil-society groupings. Contributions from these sectors will enrich the preparatory and implementation phases of the conference.
2. At the invitation of The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa – FECCLAHA, religious leaders in the Great Lakes Region held a consultation in Nairobi, Kenya on the IC/GLR. Attending were religious leaders from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. They were drawn from African Independent Churches, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Pentecostals and Protestants. Other participants included International, regional and non-governmental organisations namely: The African Union (AU), The United Nations (UN), The European Union (EU), Christian Aid (CA) and the Life and Peace Institute (LPI). The list of delegates is herewith attached as ANNEX I.
3. The consultation had three objectives
  - a. The first was to give religious leaders an opportunity to gain an understanding of the conference content and process.
  - b. The second, to understand and articulate the concerns of religious leaders on issues related to the crisis in the Great Lakes Region.
  - c. And thirdly, draw a position paper that will be debated in their constituencies, adopted and elevated to the ministerial and Heads of States level for consideration and inclusion into the final document at the Summit.
4. Participants addressed the four conference themes namely: **Peace and Security, Democracy and Good Governance, Economic Development and Regional integration and Humanitarian and Social Issues**. In the ensuing deliberations, they articulated the underlying principles that should guide each thematic area and identified core recommendations they wish to see considered for adoption at the Summit level. An in-depth conference report is herewith attached as ANNEX II

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### PEACE AND SECURITY

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*Religious leaders call upon the International Conference to recognise that “**war is a defeat of humanity**”. It must be further acknowledged that war only creates more war, fuels deep hatreds, creates injustice and tramples on peoples dignity and human rights. We must live up-to the fundamental calling to be one family - a family where the individual’s rights, tolerance and sacredness of human life is acknowledged. There can be no peace without justice **if we want peace we must work for justice.***

5. The International Conference is called to:
  - a. Address security in its totality. Ranging from security and stability of the State to recognising that God’s people have a right to live in peace and have access to basic necessities.
  - b. Recognise that Security embraces all aspects of an individual’s life including economic, political, spiritual and social environmental dimensions.
  - c. Realise that the security of the nation must be based on the security of the life of individual citizens to live in peace and to satisfy basic needs while participating fully in societal affairs and enjoying freedom and fundamental human rights.
  - d. Understand that leadership carries with it responsibility and accountability. Hence, religious leaders are praying that God will raise in this region saintly leaders and Heads of State who profoundly love their people and wish to serve rather than be served.
6. In light of the above the following recommendations were made:
  - a. Governments in the region must appreciate the fact that **political stability in Burundi, The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda** is a **critical pre-requisite to peace** in the Great Lakes region. Hence any conflict resolution strategies should encapsulate all three countries.
  - b. Recognition must be made of the key role that religious leaders and groups play in conflict transformation. In light of this:
    - ❑ Religious leaders are called to respond in a more coordinated fashion to conflict in their areas of operation
    - ❑ Governments on their part need to involve and support religious bodies in the process of demobilisation, demilitarisation, rehabilitation, social integration, trauma healing and reconciliation

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- c. That women be accommodated as equal partners in conflict transformation and that peace education and peaceful resolution of conflicts should be an integral part of the education system in schools in the region.
- d. Religious leaders strongly condemning the exploitation of minerals, hardwood and other natural resources in the DRC by multi-national companies and external States, call upon the International conference to discuss this issue and explore modalities of how this can be arrested forthwith.
- e. The International conference must recognise that the indiscriminate availability of small arms and light weapons in the region is a threat to peace processes, development and stability in the region. In light of this:
  - ❑ Faith based organisations are asked to monitor the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons.
  - ❑ Governments are called to destroy illicit arms seized and the regional protocol on small arms must be upgraded to treaty level for signing by Heads of State.
- f. The political leadership must seize and desist from using differences between people to instigate conflict as a way of accessing mineral resources available in the DRC. And further recognise that these resources are a primary cause of conflicts in the region and as such a way of addressing their exploitation peaceably must be found.
- g. The issue of security of borders must be addressed in this conference if lasting peace is to be found in the region.
- h. The war in Northern Uganda must be recognised as a regional crisis and as such included in the current debate on conflict in the Great Lakes Region.

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### DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

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*Religious leaders support the idea that **society is made for men and women** - the human person may never be sacrificed for political interests. In this context, the principle to be followed is that, the dignity of the human person must always prevail over economic, social and political factors. That good governance must promote social inclusion and equity as basic principles and participation of people in public affairs must be encouraged. And that the establishment of political organisations devoid of sectarian, religious, ethnic, regional and racial extremism is a fundamental facet of stability.*

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7. Principles that should be adhered to include:
  - a. That the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government must respect their national constitutions and adhere to the provisions of the law. In particular, the Judiciary branch of government must be free to act without pressure exerted on them from the other branches of government.
  - b. Governments must realise that political and economic decision-making processes though overlapping are two separate institutions and therefore decisions concerning the economy should not be politicised.
  - c. Religious leaders conceive **civic-education** as being more than technical instructions about voting procedure. It goes deeper to assisting civil-society attain the necessary civic and political maturity to elect their leaders. Hence, civic education is an ongoing process of raising awareness and teaching about rights and duties, promoting a new vision of common good. We need civic education to **introduce changes, to accept and to implement them.**
  
8. In recognition of the above principles the following recommendations were made:
  - a. That government must respect and promote the **rule of law.**
  - b. When applying universal franchise, mechanisms should be developed to protect the rights of minorities by, ensuring their participation in the government of the State.
  - c. Governments should identify and promote principles of good governance including zero tolerance to corruption, promotion of meritocracy and a spirit of service-oriented leadership.
  - d. Working closely with governments in the region, religious leaders support the introduction of a programme of civic education that can provide a clear scale of **moral values** and a balanced notion of social justice, inspired by the values of our faiths to contribute towards the **moral reconstruction** of the region.

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### HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL ISSUES

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*Admittedly, the extreme complexity of the war in the Great Lakes region makes it difficult to evaluate the causes and interests at play, one fact cannot be disputed however: **it is the civilian population which***

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*suffers most tragically since neither ordinary laws nor the laws of warfare are respected. Religious leaders call on the recognition of the principles of solidarity – i.e. using the earth's goods to the advantage of the common good particularly to support society's weakest members - compassion, sacredness of human life and, forgiveness. In light of this they support the popularisation of the African principle of Ubuntu.*

9. In relation to humanitarian and social issues, the following principles are relevant:
  - a. That the duty of protecting humanity extends beyond the geographical and political boundaries of a State. Hence crimes against humanity cannot be considered an internal affair. Human rights have no borders they are universal and indivisible.
  - b. We have a duty to identify all means be they institutional or material, which can best serve humanitarian objectives, since the good of the human person comes before all else and stands above all human institutions.
10. In light of the above the following recommendations have been made:
  - a. After consultation with relevant parties including faith based organisations, a time frame within which refugees must be repatriated and the internally displaced persons resettled should be established.
  - b. Governments in the Great Lakes region must demonstrate their commitment and support to refugees and internally displaced persons by:
    - Setting aside within their budgets an allowance for resettling the Internally Displaced Person (IDPs) and supporting refugees.
    - Committing themselves to national rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration programs for returnees where each group is assisted according to their needs. The modalities of this process must be **outlined clearly as part of the peace process/agreement.**
  - c. The convention articulated in the African Charter on the African Child and the International convention of children in armed conflict must be recognised and the use of child soldiers stopped
  - d. In reference to HIV/AIDS, religious leaders call upon governments to:
    - Enact into law policies on non-discrimination of people with HIV/AIDS.
    - Provide affordable ARV therapy to people living with HIV/AIDS.
    - Recognise the plight of AIDS orphans and provide support services to their caregivers.

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- Governments need to recognise and explore ways to arrest other medical emergencies such as TB and Malaria, which have seen the death of a large number people in Africa.
- e. Governments should act urgently to enact policies that protect women and children from all forms of gender based violence with stiffer penalties for offenders.
- f. Governments should ensure comprehensive trauma healing and psycho-social support programmes are provided for, if real reconciliation is to take place
- g. Governments should allocate a larger percentage of public resources to provision of social services and less on military expenditure.
- h. Governments should undertake comprehensive national and regional response to natural disasters. Further to this, early warning and response mechanisms should be strengthened. For this purpose, governments should work with and use existing information from research institutions.
- i. Governments must guarantee unfettered access to internally displaced persons and refugees by humanitarian workers and the security of the latter guaranteed as far as is possible

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

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*The mere absence of war is not tantamount to lasting peace. No true peace can exist without fairness, truth, justice and solidarity. **Injustice and excessive economic and social inequalities constantly threaten peace and cause war.** Hence anything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building peace and avoiding war. The present economic social and cultural structures are ill equipped to meet the demands of genuine development and these must be revisited. As an ethical principle, religious leaders urge governments to ensure that economic and political policies and practices have as their aim the good of every person and the whole person. In addressing the issue of integration we must also foster a consciousness of universal moral values that cut across countries. The recognition of universal moral laws would help countries' dialogues on development related issues.*

11. The following principles must be taken into account:
  - a. Recognition that attainment of self-reliance, sustainable growth and economic development will be enhanced enormously by economic cooperation and integration.

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- b. Development that is merely economic does not help the human person attain his/her full potential. Development must include the cultural, transcendent and religious dimensions of man and society and recognising these, direct goals and priorities towards the same.
12. The following recommendations were made:
- a. Regional governments should promote and support the development of a regional transport and communication framework to enhance regional economic development.
  - b. Governments should promote Kiswahili, French and English in the region to enhance regional integration through a common language. Such a process would involve:
    - ❑ In Francophone countries introduction of English at the primary and secondary school levels.
    - ❑ In Anglophone countries introduction of French at the primary and secondary school levels.
    - ❑ In all countries where this is not the case, the introduction of Kiswahili at the primary and secondary school levels.
  - c. Countries in the region should acknowledge that national issues often spill over into the region. Thus, there is a need to address these nationally even as regional solutions are sought. This will include:
    - ❑ Addressing national security and poverty comprehensively
    - ❑ Ensuring that people in the country benefit from the wealth of their country. There is a further need to ensure that there is a balance of growth in the country.
  - d. A regional policy to establish a free trade area within the region should be introduced to promote small traders and micro-economies in particular.
  - e. Governments should allow free movement of people and goods, and harmonize, taxes and duties levied on goods to facilitate trade and economic integration.
  - f. Existing regional bodies should be enlarged to incorporate neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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- g. Governments should find mechanisms of protecting intellectual property rights particularly with regard to indigenous knowledge.
- h. Religious leaders within each country are encouraged to form inter-faith bodies where they don't exist and strengthen existing ones to represent their communities by making contributions to economic development policies and hold governments accountable for non- performance of existing policies.

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## CONCLUSION

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*Those who have spoken and worked on behalf of Peace have preserved humanity's honour. In coming together in this forum religious leaders have sought to support this laudable attempt by regional governments to bring peace in the region. The fact that the forum was an interfaith one is evidence of their conviction that as President Olusegun Obasanjo once said " true believers be they Muslim or Christian, know all humans are created by God and ought not to be harmed, but loved". It is the hope, nay, the dream of religious leaders that peace and stability in the Great Lakes region will one day be a reality, for in the words of Bishop Helder Camara of Brazil "When I dream it is just a dream but when we dream together, the dream can become a reality"*

**11<sup>th</sup> MAY 2004**  
**NAIROBI, KENYA.**