



Joint United Nations/ African Union Secretariat of the  
International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

Your Excellency Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to the Great Lakes Region;

The Co-Chairpersons of the Group of Friends in the Great Lakes Region;

National coordinators;  
Representatives of United Nations Agencies;  
Experts;  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Due to unavoidable circumstances, His Excellency, the Ambassador Mamadou Bah, Special Envoy of the President of the Commission of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region was unable to travel to Mombasa. He requested me to tell you how much he would have liked to be with you and wished you full success in your deliberations.

That said, on behalf of the Commission, the onus is on me to say a few words on the occasion of this first meeting of the Technical Thematic Task Forces, instituted by the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee during the meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda in February 2005.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The heat and humidity on our arrival will in no way water down our joy to be here present, within this idyllic and heavenly setting. We now know why the city of Mombasa is one of the most sought after tourist destination and for all those in quest of sunny beaches with fine sand and warm bluish-gray waters. My hope is that this magnificent setting will provide inspiration for all those who in the coming days will reflect on the main objective of this meeting, which is to design and develop draft protocols and programmes of action within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the last three years the United Nations and the African Union have been firmly committed, with the full support of the Group of Friends in the Region, to realize, or better still, concretize the proposal to organise an International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on peace, security, democracy, good governance, economic development, regional integration and humanitarian and social issues. I am very happy that this first TTF meeting today, a result of a lengthy preparatory process that led to the Dar es Salaam (DAR) Summit in November 2004, is an additional milestone towards our goal.

Indeed, the meeting is taking place 6 months after the Dar es Salaam Summit during which Heads of State and Governments from the eleven Member States of the Conference adopted the Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region; and barely two months post the first Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting, held in Kigali, Rwanda from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> February 2005

mandate by Heads of State to translate the content of their Declaration into protocols and programmes of action.

At the Kigali meeting, the Ministers adopted the terms of reference of possible protocols and programmes of action, identified priority issues that should feature in these protocols and programmes of action and appointed the Technical Thematic Task Forces on the four conference themes. The key mission of the TTTFs will be to assist the National Preparatory Committee to develop the said protocols and programmes of action.

I would like to point out that when commissioning the TTTFs, the Ministers recommended that the latter should comprise highly qualified experts having a solid understanding of the complex issues in the Region. The chosen experts should be representative of the various segments of the population. We sincerely hope that the spirit and the letter of this recommendation have been adhered to, so as to reflect the usual participative and inclusive nature of our meetings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me the, at this point, to welcome on board the experts that are with us for the first time in this process and to congratulate them for having been selected. No doubt, your being selected clearly indicates that your respective countries recognize your intellectual capacities and qualities as well as your personal experience in dealing with problems in the Region using global and multi-pronged perspectives.

You will call upon these qualities to assist the Regional Preparatory Committee in translating into concrete, feasible and measurable short, medium and long-term protocols and programmes of action, the provisions of the DAR Declaration as well as relevant documents drafted throughout the process, including matrices from meetings of the National Coordinators held in Bujumbura and Kinshasa, reports from sectoral and special meetings of the Youth, Women and Civil Society Organisations. The task ahead of us seems daunting but nonetheless exciting.

During the exercise beginning today that will continue over the next two meetings scheduled for May/June and August/September 2005, you will also consult all existing relevant texts within the United Nations, African Union and sub-regional economic bodies on issues related to the conference. Indeed, as has often been said, the aim is not to reinvent the wheel but rather to propose, in light of the already existing documentation, protocols and programmes of action that duly take them into account and that are realistic and achievable.

Distinguished TTTF members, while developing draft protocols and programs of action, keep in mind the regional vision expressed in the DAR Declaration and endeavour, as far as possible, to include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, to be adopted by Heads of State and Governments during the second Summit scheduled for Nairobi before the end of the year shall undoubtedly be implemented.

I presume that you have already discussed all these aspects with the National Coordinators of the National Preparatory Committees in your respective countries. I will therefore conclude my speech but as I conclude, I would like to laud the presence of the Co-Chairpersons of the Group of Friends in the Great Lakes Region as well as that of experts from Member States that are willing to put their experience at our disposal as we embark on this task, and to thank them for their unwavering commitment to the Conference.

Thank you for your attention.