



**SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

**STATEMENT BY AMB. LIBERATA MULAMULA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT AT THE OPENING OF RIMC MEETING OF IC/GLR
BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI**

3 May 2007

**STATEMENT BY AMB. LIBERATA MULAMULA, THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF
THE CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT DURING THE OPENING SESSION OF THE
REGIONAL INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE, 3 MAY, 2007, BUJUMBURA**

**Your Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza,
The President of the Republic of Burundi,**

**Your Excellency Raphael Tuju, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of
Kenya and the Chair of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee**

**Your Excellence Madame Antoinette Batumubwira,
The Minister of External Affairs and International Cooperation of the
Republic of Burundi,**

Your Excellencies the Ministers of the Great Lakes Region,

Representatives from various partners' organizations,

Brothers and Sisters,

On behalf of the Conference Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to express our profound and sincere gratitude to you, your Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza, the President of the Republic of Burundi for considering and accepting our invitation to inaugurate the Headquarters of the Conference Secretariat in Bujumbura.

We feel much more honoured and moved by your acceptance to spare your precious time to visit and launch the headquarters of the Secretariat in spite of your pressing and demanding schedule. To us it is a clear demonstration of good will and commitment that the Government of Burundi devotes to this Secretariat and the Conference at large.

Your Excellency,

With much respect, I wish to welcome Honourable Ministers to Bujumbura, the headquarters of the Conference Secretariat and the "**Heart of Africa**". I would like to assure Honourable Ministers that our Secretariat is pleased to have you home and we look forward to your meeting convened to kick-start the Secretariat activities. To you I say ***Murakaza a Bujumbura (Welcome to Bujumbura)...***!

Allow me to recognize and thank our partners including the Group of Friends, GTZ, African Union, UN family, African Development Bank and European Union to name but few, who travel from distant capitals to be here with us on this auspicious occasion and walking with me in setting up the Secretariat.

Your Excellency

The Heads of State and Government of the Great Lakes Region through the **“Declaration on the Implementation of the Pact on security Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region Pending Entry into Force,”** assigned the Executive Secretary under the able chair of Republic of Kenya, with the responsibility to facilitate the establishment of the Conference Secretariat within the three months, after the Signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development of the Great Lakes Region. It gives me a sense of jubilation to stand before you countdown to its inauguration.

Meanwhile, I wish to thank the Government of Burundi for her devotion in honouring her commitment to implement the Declaration. I wish to thank in particular Hon. Antoinette Batumubwira, the Minister for External Affairs and International Cooperation and her colleagues in the Ministries of Finance, Works, President’s Office and others whose support cannot go unmentioned that saw the signing of Headquarters Agreement on 20 April 2007.

In line with the Agreement, your government availed to the Secretariat an office space within the Central Bank of Burundi, to be the headquarters of the Secretariat. We consider that to be a “home” since you have given to us more than what money alone can buy, **“for it is the manner of giving that count most”**.

In addition, the government facilitated necessary legal and logistical arrangements for the establishment of headquarters including granting diplomatic status to the Secretariat and necessary renovations. Besides, your respective government remitted in due course its full five years assessed contribution based on the AU Scale of Assessment as agreed in the Pact. More important, the contribution that came at a time when contributions have not yet floor at its fullest.

Your Excellency,

While I recognize the support made necessary by the Group of Friends, UN (Bujumbura) and GTZ, I wish to thank you in particular for the support that your government and people of Burundi have continued to avail to the Secretariat, In spite of the challenges of reconstruction that this country is facing. I confess to have been moved by the way I was warmly welcomed in Bujumbura by your self and by the great people of Burundi in particular. I am not amazed as to why this country is referred to as **‘the Heart of Africa’**”.

I would like to assure you that I treasure each and single contribution that the government of Burundi extended to the Secretariat, with much humility I say, ***Urakoze Cani...(Thank you so much)!***

Your Excellency,

It is very fortunate that this historical event coincides with the opening of the Special Meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee that shall deliberate on important matters as regards to further institutionalization of the Conference Secretariat.

The National Coordinators worked for two consecutive days to consider important administrative issues, the budget, workplan of the Secretariat and operationalization of the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development. Their report will be put to the Ministers for the deliberation and adoption to allow the functioning of the Secretariat.

I had a privileged to present my report on the activities undertaken so far in the establishment of the Secretariat which would not have been possible without the support of Group of Friends which enabled me to move from one capital to the other.

Your Excellency,

Today is a very important day for the people of the Great Lakes Region. It opens another chapter in our collective efforts to transform the Great Lakes Region into a space for sustainable peace, stability, development, shared growth and prosperity. It is a demonstration of our commitment to close a sad chapter of conflicts, untold human suffering and missed economic opportunities. To me it is a day of reflection and optimism, it is a day the Conference Secretariat on the Great Lakes Region will be given a home and identity.

Your Excellency,

Let me conclude by extending once again my warm welcome to the seat of the Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. I wish to reiterate our commitment to compliment the efforts of the Government of Burundi in meeting the challenges of reconstruction and development within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Thank you for your kind attention..!