



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION  
SECOND REGIONAL INTER- MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Lusaka, 22-23 July 2005**

**ADDRESS BY THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICAN  
UNION COMMISSION FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION  
AMB. MAMADOU BAH**

**Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Zambia:  
The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for the  
Great Lakes Region;  
Distinguished Heads of Diplomatic Missions;  
Distinguished Representatives of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes  
Region;**

**I would like to express my delight in being present on the occasion of the Second Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Lusaka was deliberately chosen to host this mid-term review meeting of draft protocols and programs of action. The history of your capital is full of symbols that demonstrate the valuable contribution of Zambian people not only towards the struggle to free our continent but also to various peace processes in the region.**

**Over the years, freedom fighters have used this capital as a springboard to gain independence for their countries. Zambia has also welcomed many African refugees and hosted negotiations that led to the actual agreement whose implementation greatly contributed to the International Conference on the Great Lakes process.**

**It was right here in Lusaka, in July 2000 that the OAU, before being transformed to the current African Union, held its last Heads of State and Government Summit.**

**Your Excellency,**

**On behalf of the President of the African Union Commission, I would like to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who courageously contributed to the liberation of our continent. I would equally like to thank your Government as well as the Zambian people for the warm and brotherly hospitality that we have enjoyed and also for the wonderful working environment that they provided to facilitate the proceedings of our meeting.**

**Finally I would like to thank you, Your Excellency, for having kindly accepted to crown the official opening of our deliberations by being here in person.**

**Your Excellency,**

**As you are aware, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region has been the main focus of both the OAU/AU and United Nations' concerns for the past decade. In this regard, the two organizations are pleased with the successful completion of the first phase of the Conference process at the first Summit held in November 2004. The Declaration on peace, stability, democracy and development in the Great Lakes Region that yourself and your peers adopted on that occasion clearly demonstrates your "collective determination to transform the Great Lakes into a space of sustainable peace and security, political and social stability, shared growth and development, a space of cooperation based on the strategies and policies of convergence within the framework of a common destiny... "**

**You also made decisions on strategic directions and guidelines for each of the Conference themes, which would serve as a basis of concrete, realistic and short, medium and long term measurable protocols and programs of action that you mandated the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee to develop.**

**You also declared the region a "specific reconstruction and development zone". This decision is taken in the light of the deterioration and degradation of economic and social infrastructures especially as a result of several years of war and inadequate investment in key economic sectors within the countries in the region. This situation has contributed to increased poverty and unemployment such that many countries in the Great Lakes Region are currently among the poorest in the world.**

**Your Excellency,**

**The great interest that the African Union has shown in the process of the conference as well as the economic and security situation in the region led the Peace and Security Council to devote its 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting, which was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2000, as a public forum, to the discussion of the conference process. During this meeting the council adopted a declaration on the conference in which it called upon all the member countries to immediately implement the specific and relevant provisions of the Dar-es-Salam declaration, especially those which seek to restore security at common borders, repatriate voluntarily refugees, disarm, demobilize and rehabilitate ex-combatants as well as promote principles of non-subversion and non- intervention to guide relations between States.**

**The Council further welcomed and supported the idea of declaring the Great Lakes Region " a specific reconstruction and development zone" with special funds for reconstruction; in addition, it also asked the current**

**chairperson of the African Union as well as the chairperson of the Commission to sensitize the rest of the International community particularly the UN, The Group of Friends, the European Union, the G8 and all other development partners in appropriate fora so that they can support the conference by mobilizing the resources necessary for the immense reconstruction needs within the framework of the Great Lakes Regions' Security, Stability and Development Pact which will be adopted during the Second Summit of the Conference to be held in Nairobi in November 2005.**

**In this regard, and in order to reflect the concerns of the African Union and those of the International community as a whole, the draft protocols and programs of action that have already been developed, the ones that are in the process of being developed and/or the ones that are contemplated, must take into consideration the mechanisms, treaties, conventions and agreements, that exist between countries of the Region, as well as relevant African and international ones to which member countries of the conference are party.**

**In declaring the Great Lakes Region 'a specific reconstruction and development zone', the Heads of State and Government in the region wanted to draw the attention of the international community to the enormous reconstruction needs which the countries cannot address on their own. Moreover, the translation of the concept of 'reconstruction and development zones' in the projects into cross-border economic development areas will enable the revival of economic activities whose expected results are, among others, the restoration of Peace and Stability, restoration of trust and solidarity among the communities living on either side of the common borders.**

**These activities which mainly concern border areas will precede and support the major inclusive projects whose implementation requires substantial investments and a longer time.**

**This ministerial meeting as well as the one to be held in Bangui in October 2005, are also going to analyze the nature, form and contents of the Institutional Mechanism which will ensure the follow up and implementation of these projects that are equally necessary. The essential nature of all the projects and programs of action should not lead us to dispense with the difficult but necessary prioritization exercise in order to facilitate their implementation.**

**Your Excellency,**

**The African Union Commission is determined to continue fully supporting the current phase of the Conference process, which will culminate in the adoption of the Great Lakes Regions' Stability, Security and development**

**Pact during the second summit of the Conference in November 2005. In this regard, I reiterate the willingness of the African Union to support the countries of the region in the implementation of the Pact that they will adopt in Nairobi with the same determination.**

**Thank you.**