



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

**Lusaka, 22-23 July 2005**

Speech by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General  
for the Great Lakes Region

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Zambia  
Your Excellency Chairman of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee and  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tanzania  
Your Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zambia  
Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation in the  
Great Lakes Region  
National Coordinators of the IC/GLR  
Members of the Regional Preparatory Committee  
Partners from Co-opted countries, Group of Friends and RECs  
Observers  
Colleagues from the United Nations system and the African Union

Allow me first of all to express my pleasure to be in Zambia, a country that has contributed so much to the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa and which, over the years, has been actively playing a role in the peace processes in the Great Lakes Region, particularly through the Lusaka agreements for the DRC.

Once again, Lusaka is playing a focal role in the region, this time within the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Indeed, we are here today for an important mid-term review between the two Summits of the Conference, the second one being less than four months away in November 2005.

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic,

We are very grateful that you are able to enhance the opening ceremony of this Ministerial Meeting by your presence here and that you accepted to inspire the deliberations by an opening speech to which we look forward.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

The region has witnessed encouraging progress on the long and sinuous journey towards Peace and Stability.

In **Burundi**, the electoral process took place in what many believe to be the best conditions, despite some military actions by an armed group that has not yet joined the Government of National Unity. This will make it possible to envisage, with some serenity, the presidential elections scheduled to take place in a few weeks time. Those elections are expected to end the transition cycle which began with the signing of the Arusha Agreements in 2000 and will open the way to a new era for Burundi, an era we all hope will be marked by peace, stability and prosperity. Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burundi, in view of its key role in the Great Lakes Region, your country serves as an example and provides hope and a feeling of confidence in the future for the participants of this International Conference.

Nevertheless we need to remain vigilant. Indeed, recent history has shown that even successful, free, fair and transparent elections cannot guarantee stability. They need to be coupled with a political will of openness and inclusiveness of all national stakeholders, within a climate of participatory dialogue.

In DRC, progress has also been registered. The postponement of national elections to next year, a decision reached due to the colossal preparatory task, did not provoke the outburst of violence that some expected, thus demonstrating the impressive degree of maturity of the Congolese people. On the other hand in Ituri and Kivu, the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces responded more robustly to acts of violence and other provocations by armed groups in the Eastern part of the DRC. Thus insecurity has already been reduced in certain regions.

In Kinshasa, the Government of National Unity is strengthening itself in spite of the challenges. After long debates, the new constitution was adopted. It reflects the willingness of the people and adequately outlines the need for democratic power-sharing between the different branches of Government. Of course, much remains to be done before next year's elections, for instance, crucial issues related to the Security Sector Reform; the disarmament, voluntarily or forced if need be, of foreign armed groups that are still rife in the Eastern part of the country.

In fact, this aspect rightly features among the key projects of the IC/GLR, as well as the stopping of the illicit exploitation of resources in the Eastern part of DRC, which is another key project of the Conference.

There are other welcomed developments from the **Central African Republic**. The just ended legislative and presidential free and transparent elections held in the country have sent a strong signal to the international community indicating that the country is in the right path to return to constitutional normalcy and political appeasement.

As for **Sudan**, in spite of the ongoing conflicts in other areas in the country, the swearing in of the government of national unity was very welcomed by all as a new start in the relationships between Khartoum and the Southern part of the country following several decades of war.

All such positive developments significantly strengthen the atmosphere of trust among the countries in the region in their daily efforts to build a genuine community spirit within the framework of the IC/GLR. Such a community spirit was moreover fully expressed in the concept paper prepared by the member countries of the Conference on the institutional monitoring mechanism of the process for the post-summit period, which is currently submitted to you.

Excellency Mr. President,  
Honourable Ministers,

The Regional Preparatory Committee has just completed 4 days of hard work during which it reviewed the project documents being developed on the 4 themes of the Conference. The Committee has produced a report which is submitted to you for consideration. The final amendments to these projects and protocols as well as the review of the few remaining projects to be drafted will be done during the third TTTF meeting scheduled in Nairobi in early September, and during the last RCP meeting to be held in Luanda, before the documents are given the finishing touches in Bangui, in October, for their presentation to the Heads of State during the Nairobi Summit in November.

The progress made since Kigali are noteworthy, and participants can rightly feel satisfied for a job well done. In analogy to many of the key projects in the Economic Development and Regional Integration Cluster, namely the railways corridor projects, one can say that the way is now paved for the conference, the tracks are posed, the wagons are connected and the goods, which you are preparing to consider in the next hours, are being loaded. The drivers, I mean Your Excellencies, who are the leaders of this process, are all aboard this same train, in true teamwork and harmonious cooperation among the countries of the region. What remains now is to ensure that all passengers on board this train, i.e. the citizens of this vast region, have well embarked, in other words, to ensure

that they are really the primary beneficiaries of this process and that we take them safely to the end destination.

To achieve this objective, the drivers, i.e. Your Excellencies, should be the primary spokespersons of this Conference. You need to echo its concerns on an ongoing basis, everywhere, by sensitizing your respective people, institutions, national stakeholders and the international community as a whole, to raise the needed support and to build on the existing or emerging partnerships and institutions to feed into the Conference.

In this regard, the meeting scheduled in New York in September, in the fringe of the UN General Assembly, between some of you, the United Nations, the African Union and the ministers from the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, will be an opportunity, before the Nairobi Summit, to measure the progress achieved in the process, assess the way forward and further strengthen partnership links between the region and the international community, a partnership which is indispensable for the success of the Conference.

In the same vein, you could make sure the objectives of the Conference are consistent with the Millennium Development Goals whose first five-year review is due in September, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Such a revision will impart a new driving force and further give momentum to the Conference.

Finally, it is important to contextualize the process of this Conference in the broader framework of the thinking currently underway at the United Nations and whose ultimate goal is to come up with a Peace-Building Commission. Indeed, what else would this Conference stand for if not peace building in this region?

Your Excellency the President of the Republic,  
Honourable Ministers,

I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you for your attention.