



# Regional Interparliamentary Conference on the Great Lakes Region

KINSHASA, 26 - 28 FEBRUARY 2007



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## Part One

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## Parliamentarians have an important role to play in the implementation of the Pact



I must start by thanking His Excellency Mr Ibrahim FALL, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region, because it is as a result of his actions that parliamentarians from the eleven core countries of the Great Lakes Region have been associated with this activity concerning the Pact.

Ambassador Ibrahim FALL has asked AWEPA to co-organise a Regional Parliamentary conference in order to raise awareness about it among parliamentarians from signatory

countries, and to identify how parliamentarians can get involved in the implementation of the Pact.

AWEPA would like to thank both Ibrahim FALL and the DRC's authorities for the warm welcome given to all the participants of this important parliamentary meeting.

The presence of His Excellency Joseph KABILA, President of the DRC, underlines the exceptional value of this meeting. We are also very happy and grateful that the DRC's Prime Minister, His Excellency Antoine GIZENGA, and no less than twenty members of his government are present at both the opening and closing ceremonies of this meeting.

Please allow me to also thank the First Vice-President of the DRC's National Assembly, Honourable Christophe LUTUNDULA, for managing this international conference successfully.

### **SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS:**

The main results of the conference can be found in this publication. However, I would like to insist on the establishment of a forum of parliamentarians to allow frequent exchange of views within the Great Lakes Region. In support of this, Honourable Vital KAMERHE, the DRC's National Assembly President, pleaded for

*"the organisation of a permanent dialogue forum in order to build a promising future for all."*

A second conference is scheduled in Bujumbura for the beginning of 2008. Her Excellency Liberata MULAMULA, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR), suggested that this kind of regional meeting should be organised frequently in order to involve *parliamentarians in building "the house for peace and for regional development."* AWEPA has committed itself to organising meetings regarding the follow-up of the Pact over the course of the next five years.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the donors who made the organization of the Kinshasa conference possible: the Belgian and the Dutch governments and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Their contributions and their commitment were, and continue to be, essential.

AWEPA is convinced that the Pact is the guarantor of the best possible future for the people of the eleven core countries of the IC/GLR.

*Dr. Luc DHOORE, Honorary Vice-President of AWEPA*

## From Ambassador FALL to Ambassador MULAMULA : The succession is assured !



**A**t the opening ceremony of the Kinshasa's conference, Ambassador Ibrahim FALL used a metaphor in comparing the various parliamentarians of the region to "the key who will get the Great Lakes locomotive moving." This locomotive is now in motion!

AWEPA would like to express its gratitude to Ambassador FALL for his commitment to this regional process and for his support. AWEPA is happy that this process, which is in its early stages, also enjoys the full support of Ambassador MULAMULA, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the IC/GLR, who maintains her commitment to achieving sustainable peace and development in the region.

The first part of this publication addresses the cooperation process between the core member states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR). This cooperation process was established after the Dar-Es Salaam Declaration and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

The second part of this document is closely related to the Great Lakes Region in that it explores the revival of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC) as a sub-region. This economic entity encompasses the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Burundi.

## PART ONE

### I. The historical background

#### FROM THE DAR-ES-SALAAM DECLARATION TO THE KINSHASA DECLARATION

**A**fter the fall of the Berlin Wall and the “La Baule” speech made by President François Mitterrand, political instability and armed conflict have resulted in an unrelenting deterioration in the living conditions of the peoples of the African continent

Following the conflicts which have been raging in Africa in recent years, the United Nations and the African Union combined their efforts to put an end to the dramatic situation. At the outset, most of the attention was focussed on the countries bordering on Lakes Kivu, Tanganyika and Victoria. However, the problems quickly spread to other countries, not bordering on the lakes, which were suffering from the consequences of past confrontations.

Thus, the United Nations and the African Union held a first summit which was the culmination of a process designed to restore peace whilst laying the foundations for development. This Summit was the first International Conference on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region, and it was held in Dar-Es-Salaam, in Tanzania, on 19th and 20th November 2004.

This historic gathering was key to the future of Africa. Fifteen African heads of state, the Secretary General of the United Nations and the African Union Commissioner for peace and security were present. It led to the signing of a declaration of principles intended to guide the future actions of countries in the Great Lakes region and, in the long term, to bring peace, stability and development.

These results would not have been possible if not for the determination of the participating states to reach a consensus. Some of these states were only just emerging from regional strife which had tragic consequences for their people. The

states were able to translate their resolve into action. Thus, the African states pledged to fully implement the decisions they had taken. A second summit of the Heads of State and Government was held in Nairobi on the 14th and 15th December 2006 in order to review those commitments.

Between the two summits, the inter-ministerial committees and the members of the national preparatory committees, with effective support from expert groups, concentrated on the four guiding themes included in the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration: peace and security, democracy and good governance, regional integration and economic development; and social and humanitarian issues.

The second Heads of State and Government Summit gave rise to the **Pact on Security, Stability and Development** which was signed in Nairobi on the 15th December 2006. This Pact, in particular, contains the **action plan** as well as **specific projects** falling under the overall umbrella of the Pact, with a view to improving the lives of displaced persons.

Furthermore, the signatory countries pledged to galvanize all of the actors involved to secure their ongoing involvement and full commitment to the implementation of the Pact. The agreement also established a development fund for the reconstruction of the institutions devastated by years of armed conflict, in particular in Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC. This fund, set up under the

auspices of the African Union, will be managed by the African Development Bank (ADB) and funded by the member countries and donors. **A follow-up mechanism** has been put in place which will include, in particular, a **Conference Secretariat** located in Bujumbura, Burundi. Ambassador Liberata MULAMULA, a Tanzanian national, has been appointed to the office of first Executive Secretary.

Undeniably, progress has been made. However, we are still only at the beginning of the process as at least eight core countries must approve the Pact before it can enter into force. This is why AWEPA supports the initiative of the Parliaments of the Great Lakes Region wishing to join this historic process from which they have hitherto been “excluded.”

The executive officers also expressed their agreement with this at the Nairobi summit and what remains now is the ratification of the Pact by the respective legislative powers so that it can be brought into force. **The International Parliamentary Conference** of the core states, held in Kinshasa, was necessary to bring together the elected representatives of the people who wished to contribute, in their own capacity, to the future prosperity of the Great Lakes Region.

The Kinshasa Conference resulted in the **Kinshasa Declaration** in which the core African Parliaments, on the one hand, reassert their decisive role as the legitimate representatives of their peoples and, on the other hand, pledge to work for the speedy ratification of the Pact. ●

## II. The Kinshasa Conference

**T**his conference, the first of its kind, brought together parliaments from the eleven core member states of the IC/GLR. It embodied the hope of seeing the return of peace, security and development to this great African region.

The conference was jointly organised by the Executive Secretariat of the IC/GLR and AWEPA, with technical support from the UN/AU Joint Secretariat IC/GLR specially set up for the holding of the IC/GLR. Furthermore, this important meeting attracted bilateral funding from the Kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands as well as multilateral financial contributions from the Group of Friends of the IC/GLR and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP/Kinshasa).

German, Belgian and Polish members of parliament took part in the Conference as observers, as did representatives of the East Africa Legislative Assembly (EALA), of the Parliamentary Forum of the South



*The Parliamentarians of the Great Lakes Region met in Kinshasa for three days, from the 26th to the 28th of February 2007, at the Regional Inter-parliamentary Conference. President Joseph KABILA delivered the opening address at this important meeting.*

African Development Community (SADC PF) and the AMANI Forum. The United Nations Mission to the DRC (MONUC) was also represented.

The great importance the various states attached to this initiative was evident in

the participation in the proceedings of the Conference by both members of parliament who serve on national parliamentary committees on international and development issues and that of high ranking national coordinators.



*For President Joseph KABILA (DRC), this conference was a first in the history of the region after the serious disturbances which had harmful consequences both for the populations and the economies of the states concerned.*

**T**he organisers of the Kinshasa Conference assigned themselves a twofold mission:

- to inform and raise the awareness about the Great Lakes Region Pact on Security, Stability and Development within the parliaments

- of the state signatories;
- to assist the parliamentarians in devising a mechanism for the implementation of the Pact.

Honourable Christophe LUTUNDULA of the DRC chaired the Kinshasa Conference.

The ultimate goal of the Conference was to have the parliamentarians take ownership of the Pact so as to achieve speedy ratification, prompted by a will for peace and the beneficial effects passed on to the peoples of the region. With this in mind, four dimensions, reflecting the guiding themes contained in the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration, were introduced by experts from the Joint United Nations/African Union Secretariat. A debate followed, during which the parliamentarians representing their respective Parliaments were able to share their points of view.

On the final day, Honourable LUTUNDULA commended the calibre of

the debates and the contributions of all the guests, in general, and of the parliamentarians, in particular. He then recalled the new vision of the heads of state and the new relations established amongst the core countries.

The Honourable Members of the Lower and Upper Chambers of the Parliaments then submitted their recommendations before drafting the Kinshasa Declaration.

The closing ceremony of this first inter-parliamentary conference was honoured by the presence of Mr. Antoine GIZENGA, Prime Minister of the DRC and Special Representative of Mr. Joseph KABILA KABANGE, President of the DRC.

The Kinshasa Conference, marked by solidarity and fraternity, ended in a convivial atmosphere similar to the one that prevailed during the important meeting of the elected representatives of the people of the Great Lakes Region.

## Ambassador MULAMULA's view of the Pact.

The Executive Secretary described the Pact as a "house" for peace and regional development. The foundations of this house are found in the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development.

The following instruments constitute the pillars of this great House:

- legal (protocols);
- technical (action programmes) ;
- financial (the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development, financed by contributions from the states and managed by the African Development Bank).

Atop the Great Lakes process is the Regional Follow-up Mechanism.



Ambassador MULAMULA

## III. The various dimensions of the Pact

### 1. THE PEACE AND SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE PACT

The Pact is a common contract for peace. For it to be effective, people must participate in its consolidation while reinforcing their partnership with the international community.

The priorities in this respect are, in particular, the Protocol on Non-Aggression and Mutual Defence in the Great Lakes Region, the concept of joint border security management, and the missions entrusted to the Regional Follow-up Mechanism.

Two other relevant points deserve mention:

- the fight against transnational crime and terrorism;
- the fight against the proliferation of and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

### 2. THE DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE DIMENSION

Democracy and good governance are rooted in the Pact and the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration. On the one hand, the Pact is an instrument for good regional

governance. On the other hand, the protocols represent legal instruments and pillars for the restoration of the rule of law.

Three efforts should be highlighted in this regard:

- combating discriminatory ideologies and policies;
- establishing policies designed to consolidate the rule of law and compliance with international conventions on human rights and criminal activities;
- fostering policies of national unity based on multiculturalism.

Among the priority projects, the Regional Governance Centre, Democracy, Civic Education and Human Rights has been presented as a tool for strengthening the leadership capacity of democratic institutions and organisations.

Forums and observatories can also contribute to the integration of democratic values while at the same time, making a dynamic contribution to policies and, in particular, to a network used to share ideas and experiences.

While the Dar-Es Salaam Declaration laid the foundations of the Great Lakes House, the Pact is likely an instrument for regional good governance. In this regard, Honourable Sylvestre NTIBANTUGANYA of Burundi called for the establishment of a regional good governance centre.

### 3. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION DIMENSION

Now that the conflicts the Great Lake Region has endured have ended, it is necessary to jointly take up the challenges of reconstruction and development. This must be done with participation on the part of the people and in close cooperation, in particular, with the regional economic communities, the African Union and the United Nations.

Article 19 of the Pact stipulates that the member states shall commit to jointly promoting a prosperous and integrated economic area, with a view to improving the living standards of the populations and to contributing to the development of the region.

There is a regional action programme for economic development and regional integration which consists of three sub-programmes and fifteen projects. It aims to:

- contribute to consolidating peace through poverty reduction while creating conditions conducive to development;
- boost development by building or rehabilitating economic infrastructures;
- strengthen cooperation by allowing the shared use of infrastructures and the coordinated use of trans-border natural resources (e.g. ECGLC).

## The European Union has a new « Envoy » in the Great Lakes

The new Special Representative of the European Union to the Great Lakes, Mr. Roeland VAN DE GEER (Netherlands), took up his post on the 1st of March 2007. Ambassador VAN DE GEER, who replaced Aldo AJELLO (Italy), immediately took measures to reform the security and police sectors and also to consolidate peace and democracy in the DRC, the eastern region of which still gives cause for concern. The new Special Representative will be responsible, in particular, for the monitoring of the IC/GLR in regards to the European policies set for the region. These policies are intended to promote human rights, democratisation, the fight against impunity, judiciary cooperation and the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources.



#### 4. THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL DIMENSION

The Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration highlights the social and humanitarian consequences of the conflicts having occurred in the region. The destruction of basic services, violations of human rights, the recruitment of child soldiers, sexual abuse, the exploitation of girls and women are all scourges that the Pact intends to put to an end.

The conflicts have led to the forced displacement of populations and have also had a negative impact on the communities who live in the border areas and on the surrounding environment.

The priority political options and the guiding principles contained in the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration are designed to meet

### The Recommendations

The Great Lakes region parliamentarians proposed and then adopted recommendations. Essentially, the parliaments:

- shall make the provisions needed to facilitate the speedy ratification of the Pact;
- shall propose the harmonization of their national legislations with a view to the implementation of the Pact protocols;
- shall call upon their governments to make the provisions required to guarantee their contributions to the Special Reconstruction Fund and all other commitments arising out of signing and ratifying the Pact.

the following concerns:

- cooperation on humanitarian and social matters;
- protection of vulnerable groups;
- commitment of heads of state and government to humanitarian and social matters.

In this regard, the establishment of a coordination committee on

humanitarian and social matters has raised great hopes.

It is essential to harmonize the various national legislations and to legislate so that the core states acquire a legislative framework conducive to the implementation of the Pact and its protocols especially as this concerns the humanitarian and social dimension.

## IV. The Role of Parliamentarians in consolidating the process

While the signing of the Pact has raised hopes for peace, security and development amongst the populations of the signatory countries, the ratification will bring the guarantees needed for the consolidation of peace while laying the foundations for development.

As Mr. Johan SWINNEN, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the DRC, noted, it is important that the parliamentarians work diligently towards consolidating the process by ratifying of the Pact. The speedy ratification is desirable insofar as it will *“provide a sound legal and institutional basis on which a system and even a model of cooperation and partnership can be built.”* It is true that the active involvement of the people’s regional representatives lends legitimacy to the objectives of the Pact and enhances community and democratic dynamics.

As things stand, the parliamentarians can play several roles. They can be instrumental in implementing the Pact and instrumental in implementing the action programme, in particular, by holding the Executive accountable to making progress in the implementation of the Pact. Several parliamentarians called for the establishment of a new

Parliamentary Forum to allow for the opportunity to regularly share their opinions. Along these same lines, Honourable Faustin MUNYAKABERA of Rwanda requested that states who are not members of the future Forum should do as well so as to avoid duplication.

Honourable Vital KAMERHE, Speaker of the Congolese National Assembly, also advocated the *“setting up of a framework for an ongoing dialogue and sharing of experience so as to gradually build a basis for a promising common future.”*

In organizing the Kinshasa Conference, the parliamentarians and leaders of the Great Lakes Region demonstrated their pledge of support. Hence, at the opening sitting, President KABILA asserted that the DRC would meet all the commitments it had entered into at the IC/GLR and informed the participants that the DRC Government would submit,



*Honourable Vital KAMERHE, Speaker of the Congolese National Assembly*

without delay, the draft of the Security Pact to the Congolese parliament for ratification. This Pact was signed on 15th of December 2006 in Nairobi by the heads of states and governments. Honourable ONYANGO KAKOوبا of Uganda did likewise, stating that his country was committed to the process and that he hoped to be the first to ratify the Pact so as to bring the past to a close. These intentions set a positive tone for the process!

### AWEPA pledges to support the Executive Secretariat of the IC/GLR

Luc DHOORE, Honorary Vice-President of AWEPA promised Liberata MULAMULA AWEPA’s support, mirroring the cooperation extended to Ibrahim FALL, whose term of office came to an end in March 2007. Mr. DHOORE stipulated that AWEPA was ready to continue co-organising the Pact follow-up meetings for the coming five years.

## V. Outcomes of the Kinshasa Conference

### 1. THE KINSHASA DECLARATION

The participants of the Kinshasa Conference found the exchanges between the parliamentarians and the experts responsible for introducing the various dimensions of the Pact to be of high quality. This quality was particularly enhanced by the fact that the lower and upper house parliamentarians, nominated by their parliaments, served on committees specialized in the issues under consideration (foreign relations, cooperation, defence, etc.).

In sum, the dimensions of the Pact, which are, in fact, key to the concerns of the peoples of the Great Lakes region, was given great attention by their elected representatives.

The quality and dispassionate nature of the debate was probably instrumental in achieving the first outcome of this regional gathering of parliamentarians, namely the Kinshasa Declaration.

The initiative to create such a draft clearly exemplifies the will of parliaments to commit to the pursuit of peace and development in Africa, in general, and in the Great Lakes region in particular. This joint declaration is important as it reflects the will of the parliamentarians to act in support of the legitimate aspirations of their people.

In the Kinshasa Declaration, the parliamentarians welcomed the Pact and pledged an early ratification with a view to a speedy entry into force. The elected representatives, moreover, stated their intention to disseminate the document and to make their fellow citizens, in their respective constituencies, aware of it. Raising awareness is essential—especially in the border areas where tensions often run high.

The Kinshasa Conference, co-organised by the Joint Secretariat of the UN/AU for the IC/GLR and AWEPA, was of crucial importance in that it provided an opportunity for members of parliament from border areas formerly at war with one another to come together again in order to work on promoting the Pact amongst their fellow citizens. This novel situation would have been unthinkable

five years ago, which serves as evidence that the region is well on the way to reconciliation!

The parliamentarians, aware of their powers and of the need to implement the projects, called upon their governments to free up the contributions earmarked for the conference budget and for the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development.

The parliamentarians pledged to pursue the dialogue through the new regional forum so as to contribute to peace and to the full implementation of the Pact. AWEPA particularly welcomes this plan and hopes that the initiative will be carried through, as it would represent an excellent opportunity for these elected representatives to contribute both to crisis prevention and crisis resolution.

### 2. THE BRAZZAVILLE DECLARATION

In the wake of the Kinshasa Conference, a follow-up conference on peace and security was held on 28th and 29th March 2007 in the Republic of Congo. This event was held by AWEPA and the UNDP with the backing of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for the Great Lakes Region. Its purpose was to raise the awareness of Congolese elected representatives on the need to counter the flow of small arms and light weapons in their country.

At that Conference, AWEPA and the UNDP urged the Congolese elected representatives to commit to the ratification of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development and to join the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (ALPC) in the Great Lakes region and in the Horn of Africa.

The issue of small arms flows is acute in Congo-Brazzaville because, according to a survey carried out by the NGO Small Arms Survey published by the UNDP in 2005, around 34.000 weapons were still in circulation.

The highlight of the Conference was the Brazzaville Declaration. In it, the Congolese parliamentarians recognised the importance of the Pact. They also

stated their unfailing resolve to contribute to pacifying their country as well as consolidating an atmosphere of calm, security, political and social stability and economic growth. The Congolese parliamentarians also called upon their government to strengthen the institutional surveillance framework to counter the proliferation, illicit circulation, and bearing of small arms and light weapons in Congolese territory.

Additionally, they called upon their government to engage in the accession process to the Nairobi Protocols on SALW and the United Nations Protocol on Firearms. The Brazzaville Declaration also advocates the harmonisation of Congolese legislation with that of the countries in the sub-region when it comes to combating the spread of SALW.

### 3. THE KINSHASA ROAD MAP

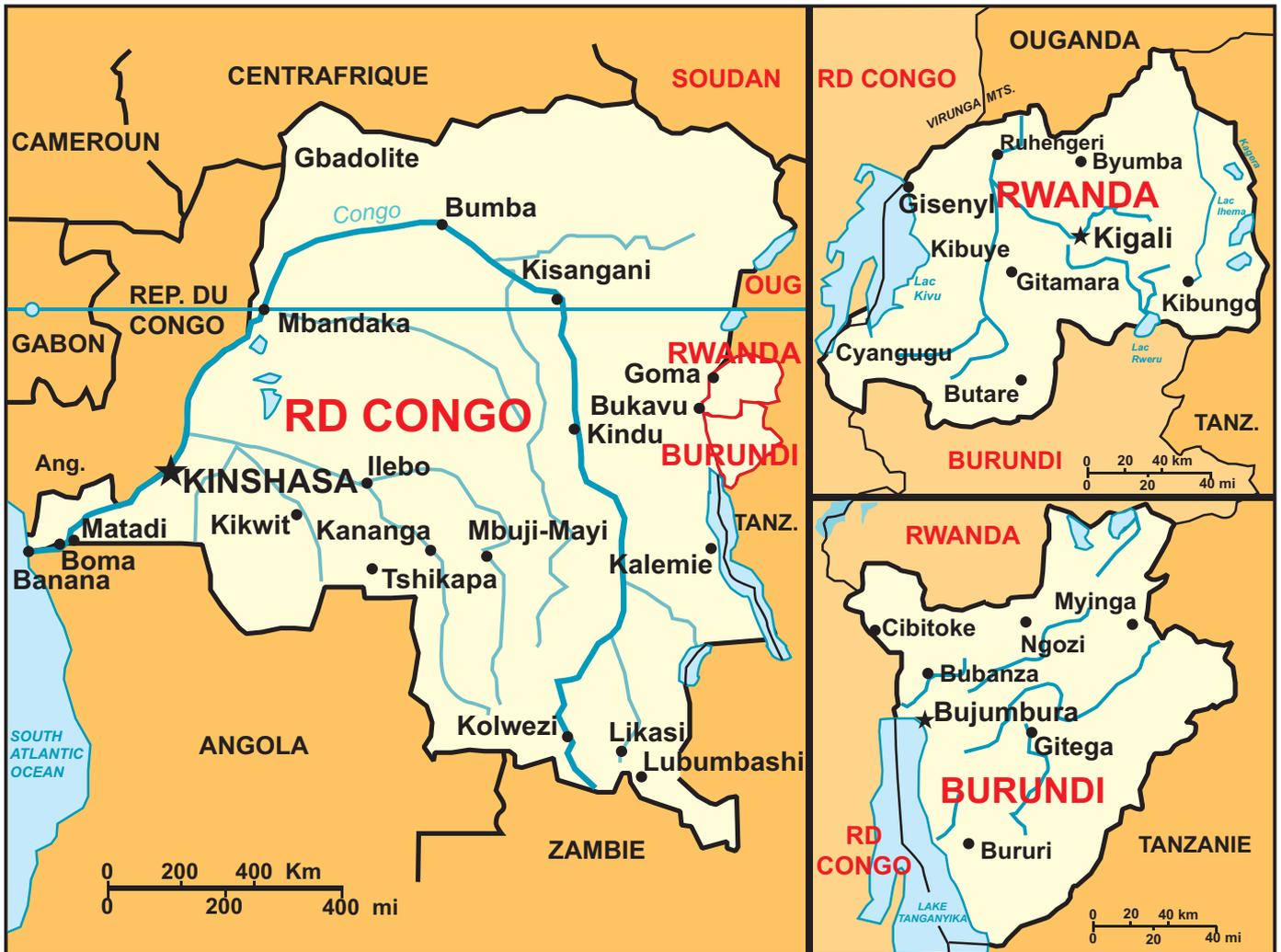
On 31st May and 1st June 2007, the MPs belonging to the Defence and Security parliamentary committees and about thirty Senators from the DRC met at a peace and security workshop in the Great Lakes region to work towards the ratification of the Pact. They also addressed the matter of harmonizing the legislation to enable the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol.

The two-day workshop was organised by AWEPA just after the Kinshasa Inter-parliamentary Conference.

Dr. Luc DHOORE, Honorary Vice-President of AWEPA, spoke of the impact of the proliferation of SALW internationally in order to raise awareness amongst DRC parliamentarians on the issue of the spread of these weapons in the DRC. In this connection, Luc DHOORE advocated the speedy ratification of the Pact whilst stressing the need to adapt Congolese legislation.

At the end of the workshop, the DRC parliamentarians pledged, through the adoption of the road map, to work towards the ratification and the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region so as to secure peace in the DRC.

## PART TWO



Louis MICHEL, European Commissioner

## The reactivation of the ECGLC

### THE EUROPEAN UNION SUPPORTS REGIONAL DYNAMICS

European Commissioner Louis MICHEL, responsible for Development and Humanitarian Aid, encouraged the process which led to the signature of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

At the Conference on the involvement of Europe in the Great Lakes region on 21 December 2006, hosted by the Belgian Royal Institute for International Relations, Louis MICHEL particularly welcomed the emergence of a new regional environment based on confidence and peace. He also encouraged the reactivation of the ECGLC which would contribute to the maintenance of peace as well as development within the framework of exchanges, partnerships and shared goals formulated in the interest of the peoples of the region of the Great Lakes. To this end, the European Commissioner spared no effort in outlining grants close to 800 million euros for the Great Lakes countries covering the period from 2008 to 2013. ●

**A**t the Kinshasa Conference, the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi parliamentarians expressed the hope that the first sub-regional cooperation initiative not be forgotten. This initiative was the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC), established in 1976, with a view to economic integration and cross-border cooperation for the development of the sub-region.

There are those who feel that the current ambitious cooperation process should embrace some of the lessons learned from the ECGLC, the reactivation of which is currently under consideration, despite the troubled times the people of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi have experienced.

The failure of the first attempt can be attributed to the trials most African states endured during the 90s. It is true

to say that the ECGLC did not benefit from any real involvement of the populations in the community development projects.

Personal relations between heads of state were so decisive, that this fine sub-regional initiative came to a halt when the member states involved were confronted, first with internal difficulties and then with inter-state strife.

The ECGLC therefore had not fulfilled its role in terms of border security, the development of activities of common interest, and socio-economic cooperation. Those who wish to see the ECGLC revived maintain that the cooperation process amongst the eleven core countries will emerge strengthened and equipped with a better understanding of each of the three countries previously at war with one

another. However, a reactivation is predicated upon the resolution of internal difficulties in the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi as well as on the commitment of their political authorities.

At the Kinshasa Conference, several parliamentarians wondered whether there was any point in taking the matter further given that the cooperation, when restricted to three countries, had not yielded the anticipated outcomes!

Generally speaking, both experts and the parliamentarians replied to these concerns in arguing that this only strengthened the case for promoting broader cooperation. In addition, states were encouraged to settle their disputes peacefully whilst fostering cooperation to the benefit of the great region of Africa which has great hopes for development.

**I**n our view, it is not unimaginable that we will see the peoples of the member states of the ECGLC cooperating and valuing their respective uniqueness once again as history tells us that, despite past confrontations and atrocities perpetrated, there is room for reconciliation. This was true of France and Germany who have waged war on one another three times since 1870.

Both of these conflicts were part of the tragic world wars. These grave events did not, however, prevent visionary politicians from promoting economic cooperation with a view to creating social ties between their people. The six founding countries of the Economic Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) thus led to the European Economic Community (EEC) and later, to the European Union. The Franco-German relationship, once a hostile one, has often been the driving force behind the amazing European construction- the "economic adventure" - before this became political.

Thus, economic cooperation on the ECGLC model could, provided the disputes are settled and some revitalization done, serve as a framework for cooperation between states which were recently enemies in this case as well. Hence, the exploitation of the methane deposits in the Kivu Lake, the rehabilitation of the hydroelectric power



*Ambassador SWINNEN welcomed the confidence AWEPA continues to enjoy in the ECGLC framework and in the enlarged framework of IC/GLR. He encouraged all parliamentary initiatives in the sub-region and, in particular, those within the ECGLC.*

stations, a common agricultural policy to tackle the challenges of globalisation, or again, customs cooperation, are all reasons for considering strong ties, which constitute an indispensable underpinning of economic and social development of benefit to all. The

various populations could also profit from the positive externalities of their respective economies. However, all these proposals will take time to materialize for one should not underestimate the feelings of bitterness and mistrust which still persist, especially in border areas. ●

The Kingdom of Belgium, who knows the case well, encouraged moves to reactivate the ECGLC in hosting a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Great Lakes region in July 2004 and, more recently, a meeting of the speakers of the legislatures chambers of the three countries, in Brussels, in May 2005. Since then, the Kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands have cooperated and become increasingly committed to promoting an ECGLC which could offer leverage to cooperation and peaceful regional development, in particular, by sending experts responsible for assessing its situation and the potential of its institutions. In this respect, both Belgium and the Netherlands have relevant experience, especially as founding members of the European Union and the BENELUX on which the ECGLC was based in the early days.

On the multilateral front, it is abundantly clear that international organisations, following AWEPA's example, are becoming increasingly committed to the reactivation of the ECGLC. For Instance, the European Union has recently offered its political and financial support. Commissioner Louis MICHEL, with special responsibility for development and humanitarian aid, visited Bujumbura and Kigali in April 2007 during meetings that praised the efforts of countries in the sub-region, damaged by years of conflict.

The aim was to help establish a regional area of economic cooperation and of peace and stability. In this way, the European Union contributed to reviving the process thanks to the 50 million euro programme. The programme is designed, firstly, to restore operational



*In the Special Assistant Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Ross MOUNTAIN's view, the best way of achieving lasting peace is to re-unify peoples around specific community initiatives for peace, stability and development, in a shared enthusiasm and total respect for their cultural diversity and relative histories.*

capability to the ECGLP Secretariat and, secondly, to assist it in implementing structural initiatives in key sectors, namely energy, transport, agronomy- as well as research and university education. To succeed, the reactivation of ECGLC must be realized through concrete projects.

Although one cannot establish a strict comparison, it would seem that, like the history of the European Union, the

establishment of sustainable peace in the region of the Great Lakes will involve some essential stages, including in particular:

- the constitution of stable democratic states;
- the establishment of broad regional cooperation encompassing more sectorial economies
- the promotion of formal structures of cooperation between the states in the region.

## ECGLC: A great step forward in Bujumbura!

The foreign ministers of the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi took part in an important meeting on the reactivation of the ECGLC under the auspices of Belgium, represented by its minister of foreign affairs. This meeting, which was also sponsored by the European Commission, took place in Bujumbura on 17th April 2007. On this occasion, the ECGLC foreign ministers approved the appointment of Honourable Gabriel TOYI, of Burundi, to the post of Interim Executive Secretary of the ECGLC until a permanent Secretariat can be set up by the heads of state at their next summit. The ECGLC Secretariat, in its first year, will be funded to the tune of 970.000 dollars provided, for the most part, by Belgium and the European Union.

Moreover, the ECGLC ministers agreed on the following five priority programmes:

- peace and Security, Democracy and Good Governance;
- agriculture and Food security;
- energy;
- infrastructure and Communications;
- education, Research and Investment.

In terms of timing, the ministers decided to hold a meeting to evaluate progress made on these activities at the beginning of September 2007. Ministers recommended that, henceforth, member states' contributions to the budget be equal.

## Footnotes :

<sup>1</sup> The eleven core countries of the IC/GLR are Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, United Republic of Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan and Zambia. The co-opted countries are: Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> The recommendations and the Kinshasa Declaration can be perused in full on the AWEPA Internet site at :<http://www.awepa.org>.



*National delegates at the opening ceremony of the Kinshasa Conference.*



*Luc DHOORE and Antoine GIZENGA, Prime Minister of the DRC.*

## Colophon

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## More Conferences

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region that took place in Kinshasa in February 2007 was the first of its kind. It fits in clearly with similar past and future AWEPA parliamentary conferences on the themes such as peace consolidation, poverty reduction, regional development, private sector development and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The involvement of parliamentarians from the Great Lakes Region in the specific issue of the Pact of Stability, Security and Development for the Great Lakes Region remains a key priority for AWEPA.

A new conference on this topic will take place in March 2008 in order to follow-up on the Kinshasa Conference and provide an opportunity to evaluate the progress made in the different countries concerned.

