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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
PROCESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT
LAKES REGION**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The idea of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region dates back to the 1990s. In 1994, and in pursuance of the pertinent resolutions and declarations adopted by their respective policy organs on the situation in the region, the OAU and the United Nations agreed to organize, jointly, an International Conference on the Great Lakes Region whose objective would be to address, in a comprehensive manner, the interrelated root causes of the conflicts in the Region and to consolidate peace at national and regional levels. Following numerous consultations conducted jointly by the representatives of the two organizations, and given the positive developments then taking place in the region, the countries concerned, their neighbours, the development partners and the international community at large embraced the idea and decided to lend it their support.

2. The present report presents a brief overview of the evolution of the process, the results achieved thus far, as well as the envisaged activities for the coming months. It also covers the cooperation between the AU, the United Nations and other partners in the process of the Conference.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE STEPS THAT LED TO THE FIRST SUMMIT OF THE PROCESS OF THE CONFERENCE

3. Initially designed to cover the six riparian countries of the African Great Lakes (Burundi, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), the Conference incorporated Zambia into the circle of the "core " countries in 2003 and, subsequently, in October 2004, it included Angola, the Republic of Congo, Central African Republic (CAR) and the Sudan. At the beginning of the preparatory phase of the process of the Conference, the United Nations and the OAU had envisaged organizing the Conference exclusively around the issues of peace and security; democracy and good governance; and economic development and regional integration. Following consultations with the countries of the region, and taking into account the magnitude of the social and humanitarian problems in the region, the latter issue was added to the three original issues, which, together, constituted the four themes of the Conference, namely peace and security; democracy and good governance; economic development and regional integration; and social and humanitarian issues.

4. Following the acceptance by the different concerned actors of the ownership of the Conference, the actual preparatory process started in Nairobi, in June 2003, with the holding of the first meeting of National Coordinators. It continued, throughout 2004, with the holding, among others, of meetings of the

Regional Preparatory Committee (RPC), as well as sectoral meetings which regrouped women, the youth and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from the region. During these different meetings, the four themes of the Conference were examined in depth.

5. The meetings made it possible to identify the numerous challenges facing the countries of the Great Lakes Region, both individually and collectively. They also made it possible to map out a common vision and to project shared orientations on all the issues, and to develop proposals for solutions based on a regional approach to each of the themes of the Conference. The outcomes of these various meetings were incorporated into a draft Declaration by the RPC.

6. The process reached its apex with the First Summit of the Process of the Conference, held in Dar-es-Salaam from 19 to 20 November 2004. The Summit was preceded by a meeting of Foreign Ministers, also held in Dar-es-Salaam from 16 to 17 November 2004, to examine the draft Declaration prepared by the RPC. The Summit was attended by 10 out of the 11 Heads of State of the “core” countries, the Heads of State Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa, as well as by the Chairperson of the African Union and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Commission was represented by a delegation led by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, representing the Chairperson of the Commission, who could not attend, and including the Commissioners in charge of Political Affairs, Economic Affairs and Social Affairs, respectively. The Summit adopted a Declaration known as the “Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace and Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region”.

7. The Declaration is set out in five parts:

- the Preamble describes the economic, social and humanitarian situation which has prevailed in the region for the past 10 years;
- the Vision expresses the commitment of the Heads of State of the 11 member countries of the Conference to work together to build a stable, secure and developed region, in strict compliance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union;
- the Policy Options and Guiding Principles on the four themes contain possible solutions to the problems identified in the Preamble;
- the Follow-up Mechanism relates to the appropriate structures for translating the commitment of the Heads of State into draft protocols and programmes of action;

- the Final Provisions embody an appeal to the AU, the UN and the rest of the International Community to assist the countries of the region in implementing the provisions of the Declaration.

8. The Declaration committed the Heads of State of the member countries to engage the international community, especially the United Nations and all its agencies, the AU and relevant Regional Economic Communities (RECs), International Financial Institutions, the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region and other development partners, to support the countries of the region, in declaring the Great Lakes Region a “Specific Reconstruction and Development Area,” with a Special Fund for Reconstruction. To this end, the Heads of State pledged to mobilize the resources available in the region.

9. In the Declaration, the Heads of State further decided to undertake more regular political consultations, to consolidate and materialize their cooperation in the form of a Pact on Security, Stability and Development, to be adopted at the Second Summit of the Conference, scheduled to take place in Nairobi, in November 2005. The Declaration also established a Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIC), with the responsibility to prepare selected, concrete, achievable and measurable draft protocols and programmes of action, with specific short, medium and long-term objectives. The draft protocols and programmes of action to be adopted by the Nairobi Summit, together with the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, will form the “Security, Stability and Development Pact for the Great Lakes Region”.

III. TOWARDS THE SECOND SUMMIT OF THE PROCESS OF THE CONFERENCE

10. The adoption of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration provided a springboard to the second phase of the process of the Conference, which consists of formulating draft protocols and programmes of action. The preparations for the second Summit started with the first meeting of the RIC, held in Kigali, on 17-18 February 2005. That meeting examined and adopted the terms of reference of the draft protocols and programmes of action. It also set up four Thematic Technical Task Forces (TTTFs), comprising of national experts, to work on the draft protocols and programmes of action of the four themes of the Conference, and adopted a timeline for subsequent preparatory meetings.

11. The first meeting of the TTTFs took place in Mombasa, from 4 to 8 April 2005, to consider the terms of reference and the lists of draft protocols and action programmes of action adopted by the RIC, in Kigali. These various drafts are being fine-tuned at the Joint Secretariat, constituted by the UN and the AU, with the support of consultants recruited for that purpose, for transmission in due course to the “core” countries. The documents will be reviewed at the second meeting of the TTTFs, scheduled to take place in Nairobi from 27 June to 1 July 2005.

IV. ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE PROCESS OF THE CONFERENCE

12. At its 3rd session held in Maputo, in July 2003, the Executive Council of the AU examined the preparatory process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. On that occasion, Council made an urgent appeal to the international community, particularly the bilateral and multilateral development partners, to provide political, diplomatic, technical and financial support towards the preparation, the holding and follow-up of the International Conference, in order to ensure its success.

13. It was against this background that around 20 developed countries for the Organization for Economic Development (OECD), three African countries (Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa), international organizations and NGOs, as well as African and international financial institutions, met in Geneva, on 4 December 2003, to establish the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region. The meeting, which was attended by the African Union and the United Nations, explored the ways and means to ensure political, diplomatic, technical and financial support to the Conference. The meeting made commitments regarding the support to be provided towards the preparatory process of the Conference.

14. Co-chaired by Canada and The Netherlands, the Group has an established structure. It has also established a Trust Fund to finance the activities relating to the process of the Conference. The resources for the Fund are mobilized through voluntary contributions from the members of the Group, as well as from organizations and institutions that are willing to show their support to the process of the Conference and to demonstrate their solidarity with the countries of the region.

15. The Group of Friends of the region has provided the invaluable political, diplomatic, technical and financial support that made it possible to accelerate the process since early 2004. Furthermore, at its meeting in Ottawa, held from 28 February to 1 March 2005, the Group decided to continue to support the “core” countries in their efforts to establish peace and stability and reconstruct their region. It also reiterated its commitment to lend its support towards the continuation of the process of the Conference, as well as to its Joint Secretariat. In this regard, the Group provided assistance towards the preparation and organization of the RIC meeting in Kigali and the first meeting of the TTTFs in Mombasa.

V. ROLE OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

16. In its above-mentioned decision on the preparatory process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Executive Council encouraged me to pursue my efforts, in consultation with the United Nations and

the countries of the region, and to take all necessary measures to support the preparatory process and contribute to the success of the Conference. As part of the implementation of this decision, the African Union participated actively in all the phases of the process of the Conference. It also took part in all the awareness-building missions to the “core” countries, as well as to the countries of the region and the international community. The African Union also participated in all the meetings held in preparation for the first and second Summits. The Commission hosted two meetings of the RECs in January and March 2004, respectively, to examine how best to get the RECs actively involved in the process of the Conference. It also provided interpretation and translation services for several meetings organized in pursuance of the process of the Conference.

17. As part of its direct contribution to the preparatory activities of the Conference, the AU made available US\$50,000, in 2004, to the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to finance certain programmes. The AU also covered all the expenses relating to the staff who serviced the Dar-es-Salaam meeting. In addition, within the framework of the Joint Secretariat, the AU contributed to the elaboration of the documents which formed the basis of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration.

18. Lastly, Council will recall that, at its meeting held on 13 April 2004, it authorized the establishment of an African Union Liaison Office for the Great Lakes Region, in Nairobi. The establishment of this Office helped to strengthen partnership and cooperation with the United Nations in the preparatory process of the Conference. Steps are currently underway to beef up both the staff complement and facilities of the Office, so as to more effectively meet the requirements of second phase of the process of the Conference.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

19. Since the launching of the preparatory process of the Conference, significant progress has been made. I would like, in this respect, to highlight the conclusion of the first phase of the process, with the adoption of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, and the initiatives being taken within the framework of the second phase of the Conference. I would like, also, to acknowledge the support provided by the Group of Friends of the Region to the process of the Conference and to the Joint Secretariat.

20. I urge the member countries of the Conference to implement the relevant provisions of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, particularly those relating to border security; voluntary repatriation of refugees; disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration of ex-combatants; non-subversion and non-intervention. I note also, with satisfaction, the measures taken by the member countries of the Conference to mobilize resources from within the region in the framework of the Special Fund

for Reconstruction, as envisaged in paragraph 53 of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration, in relation to the Specific Reconstruction and Development Area.

21. In this context, and with a view to supporting the countries of the Region, the Commission will continue to work for the strengthening of its cooperation with the United Nations within the framework of the Joint Secretariat responsible for steering the process. The success of the second phase of the process of the Conference and the implementation of the decisions of the Nairobi Summit, scheduled for November 2005, require increased political, diplomatic, technical and financial support by the international community through the Group of Friends of the Region. In this respect, I call upon the international community to provide the necessary support to the Specific Reconstruction and Development Area and to the Special Fund for Reconstruction.

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