

**GENDER MINISTERS' MEETING ON WOMEN,
PEACE, AND SECURITY (WPS)**

Implementation and Monitoring of the WPS

Commitments in the Great Lakes

23 November 2018, Uganda

Opening remarks by SESG Said Djinnit

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished ICGLR colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my deep appreciation to the Government of Uganda for hosting this important meeting. As you know, Uganda is the current Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region. I applaud Uganda's

strong commitment to bring women's voices and issues to the table.

Almost five years ago, my Office launched the Women's Platform to ensure that women play critical roles in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and participate fully in the broader peace and development agenda for the Great Lakes region. The Platform built on the momentum already generated by women's groups and movements in several countries in the region. It also complemented efforts at the regional level by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to promote gender equity and women participation in peace and security activities.

Over the past few years, we have seen many positive examples of progress: Rwanda has gained broad recognition for putting in place a gender-balanced Cabinet

last month, with 50 percent of its members women. In the Central African Republic, women have successfully contributed to negotiating between armed actors to halt the escalation of inter-communal tensions. Uganda has adopted a gender-sensitive budget. And South Sudan has joined Burundi, Kenya and several other countries in the region in adopting National Action Plans based on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These efforts are linked by the recognition that women play a crucial role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building and sustainable development.

Although a lot has been achieved, more remains to be done. Let me highlight four key areas, in which I hope we can achieve further progress:

First, we need to speak with one voice to effectively promote the women, peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region. The newly developed ICGLR Regional Action Plan provides a useful Framework in this regard, which will contribute to improving coordination across borders. I would like to call on you, Honourable Ministers, to lend your full support by not only endorsing this Plan but also helping to translate it into National Action Plans where not yet already done.

Second, we need to redouble our efforts to ensure greater participation of women in peace and political processes. It is widely acknowledged that women's participation is directly linked to more sustainable peace. And yet, the number of women engaged in peace talks and dialogue

processes in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the DRC and South Sudan remains limited. Similarly, gender parity in most governments in the region has not yet been achieved. This meeting provides a timely opportunity to contribute to positive change, ahead of the upcoming elections, including in the DRC and Burundi.

I hope all countries represented here will implement the decision taken by the Regional Oversight Mechanism on 8 October in Kampala to ensure a minimum of 30 percent women participation in peace and political processes. As you are aware, this was one of the recommendations resulting from the recent solidarity missions undertaken to several countries of the region under the leadership of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform. This quota is of course an interim objective as we pursue equal representation among men and women, including in the national Executive, Legislature and Judiciary bodies.

In this regard, we are working on ways and means to help create opportunities and mechanisms to provide girls and women with the requisite leadership skills.

Third, we also need to support the socio-economic empowerment of women. Advancing women's participation and leadership in all areas of society strengthens national economies and societies. While quota policies may significantly increase the number of women in decision-making processes, only women's socio-economic empowerment can pave the way for their effective representation and lead to a significant reduction in gender inequalities. It is therefore my hope that together we can move forward with the proposed investment fund for women.

Lastly, let me highlight the importance of effective coordination and monitoring of the impacts of our activities. In this regard, we should build on and

strengthen existing mechanisms at the regional and national levels and share lessons learned as well as best practices.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing, I would like to commend once again the ICGLR, your governments, civil society, and the involved UN Agencies, for their tireless efforts in advancing the 1325 Agenda and the status of women in the Great Lakes region. I would also like to encourage civil society to scale up their engagement with governments in the spirit of a new, positive and long-lasting partnership. Let's move forward together and make gender equity and equality finally a reality.

With that, I wish you fruitful and rewarding deliberations.

Thank you.