

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ZACHARY MUBURI MUITA

ICGLR EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON REFUGEES IN THE GREAT LAKES
REGION**

Kampala, Uganda

7TH March, 2019

H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda and Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the PSC-F Framework;

Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Member States of the ICGLR and the PSC-F Framework;

Ambassador Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Great Lakes region;

Ambassador Basile Ikuoebe, Special Representative of the AU Chairperson and Head of the AU Liaison Office for the Great Lakes region;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my distinct pleasure to make this brief remarks at the outset of this important meeting on an issue that is at the top of our challenges in the region, and that is the issue of the refugees in our region. This high level meeting is another indication of the urgency that the region has placed on the need to find durable and comprehensive solutions to the protracted challenge of forced displacement. This is even more critical when we note the disproportionate impact on vulnerable women and children as a result

of their displacement from their countries of origin, and the persistent challenge of availing all the necessary humanitarian and social services that they direly need. Additionally, through no fault of their own, host communities are also overburdened and affected by these mass movement of vulnerable people into their fragile environments, despite their magnanimous willingness to share the little they have. As we all know, host governments labor as much as possibly to abide by their obligation to offer protection to refugees, even in the face of meager resources, capacity challenges and security fears. It is therefore auspicious that the focus of these meeting is on durable solutions to all these challenges, and particularly in emphasizing the regional nature of the problem and the necessity of collective and sustained action.

Your Excellency,

Distinguished Delegates,

The ICGLR, as co-organizer of this meeting with our partners at the Office of the Special Envoy for the Secretary General of the UN, and our host, the Government of Uganda, endeavors to work together with all of you in advancing this sustained action, and in finding creative ways to tackle what has been a very protracted situation. To that end, the ICGLR has been at the

forefront promoting policies aimed at the protection of refugees and IDPs and search for durable solutions, and has promulgated two Protocols on the property rights of returnees and on the protection of Internally Displaced People (IDPs). The ICGLR is also currently implementing the “Displaced Persons and Host Communities Project for the Great Lakes Region (GLR)”, which will focus on conducting research on development responses and solutions to forced displacement, and facilitating policy dialogue to ensure actionable implementation by our Member States. This pilot project is funded with support from the World Bank, and we are grateful for this collaboration on an issue that is crucial to our broader mutual objective of eradicating poverty in the region.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have alluded at the beginning to the resource and capacity challenges that face host countries as a result of the influx of refugees. The International community and our development partners in particular have walked this challenging journey with our Member States, and we hope that they will not only sustain this support, but more importantly, address the emerging consensus around integrating development into the nexus of the emergency

humanitarian relief and protection they currently offer. This is essential if we are to achieve sustained impact, and significantly improve outcomes for refugees and host communities in the long run.

Your Excellency,

I will be remiss if I don't take this opportunity to commend your leadership, Mr. President, and that of the Republic of Uganda on this issue of forced displacement. Your country continues to host a huge number of refugees while providing them with a dignified opportunity to live side by side with their local host communities. That is in keeping with what you referred to during the 2017 Solidarity Summit on Refugees here in Kampala, as Uganda's Pan-Africanist orientation and our people's history of co-existing with neighbours over millennia. I therefore want to register our appreciation on your continued engagement as exemplified by your presence today to address this High Level Meeting.

Your Excellency,

Ladies and gentlemen,

A lot of work was done in the run up to our meeting today by Experts from our Member States and our partners, and I would like to equally extend my

gratitude to them all for contributing to this important endeavour. I also want to take this opportunity to salute my partner and friend, Ambassador Said Djinnit, for his leadership and support on so many issues facing the Great Lakes region during his successful tenure as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General to the Great Lakes region. It is fitting that he is departing after having again led the way in bringing us together today to address the plight of our vulnerable population of refugees. I wish him well in his future endeavours, and trust that he will always be around to provide his counsel and support to us in the Great Lakes region as a true son of Africa.

Your Excellency,

Allow me to finally thank the Government and people of the Republic of Uganda for the generous hospitality and great facilities offered to all of us throughout our stay in this beautiful city of Kampala.

Thank You

Merci Beau Coup

Asante Sana