

Statement by ASG Andrew Gilmour during the closing opening session of the High-level Ministerial Consultation organised within the framework of the

“High-level regional conference on justice and good governance: Combating impunity and upholding human rights as key contributions to peace and security”

Nairobi, 15 May 2019

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear participants,

- I would like to endorse all the words expressed by my fellow colleague, SRSG Xia.
- During my opening statement on day one I mentioned that the High Commissioner for human Rights and I feel that we need to take stock of actions taken to combat impunity and strengthen human rights in the Great Lakes region, and, even more importantly, to address remaining challenges. I therefore welcome the fact that there was a consensus during technical-level consultation despite the progress achieved, still greater concerted efforts are required to

uphold human rights, promote justice, and eradicate impunity for serious human rights violations in the Great Lakes region.

- Although I did not participate in the technical-level discussions, my colleagues kept me informed about progress achieved. I was therefore happy to learn the draft declaration that will be presented to ministers today includes actionable recommendations to promote and implement appropriate and effective transitional justice legal framework policies, strategies, and programmes and to accelerate and enhance the implementation of measures to ensure better and greater access to justice especially for the most vulnerable groups.
- As you may recall, I stressed in my opening statement that *“Justice is a vital prerequisite for the development of peaceful societies based on the rule of law. So long as perpetrators feel they can brutalise with impunity, without accountability, we will see no real peace, no justice, no sustainable development, and no human rights”*.
- I was also happy to learn that includes actionable recommendations to strengthen or set up effective mechanisms to promote and protect human rights at the country and regional levels. As I said in my opening statement on day one, *“Addressing conflict requires us to look at its root causes, often based on systemic inequalities, discrimination and exclusion. Impunity fuels these drivers. Societies*

that strive to uphold human rights and the rule of law for all individuals and all communities create safeguards that prevent them from descending into violence, extremism and instability”.

- I welcome the fact that the draft declaration contains measures to ensure the implementation of recommendations contained in the Declaration.
- We look forward to the development of a Roadmap with clear timelines and specific benchmarks that include elements to promote gender equality and inclusive societies. Only such a Roadmap will enable Member States to measure progress made in the implementation of recommendations set out in the Declaration. Only such a Roadmap will give Member States and all of us a chance of bridging the gap between words and deeds.
- To conclude, I would just like to underline that contribution of civil society representatives in this conference. Our Office continues to underscore our commitment to stand with civil society representatives in the region and indeed across the globe. We will continue to express our concerns about the threatening environment in which Civil Society Organisations operate, confronting daily efforts including violence to discourage them from mobilizing and speaking out for justice and against human rights violations and inequality.

- We will continue to work with all relevant actors, including Member States to find ways and means of creating an environment where the work of human rights defenders is more recognized and supported and where human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) are protected in line with the Declaration on Human Rights defenders, A/RES/53/144 of 8 March 1999.
- So thank you all for all the work you completed during the last two days. We are delighted to be working with so many distinguished and committed partners in this essential project to fight impunity in the Great Lakes region.