

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



OPENING REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE EUGENE  
WAMALWA, EGH, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF  
DEVOLUTION AND ARID AND SEMI-ARID LANDS

DURING

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES  
REGION(ICGLR) HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON  
JUSTICE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

HELD AT WINDSOR HOTEL AND COUNTRY CLUB, NAIROBI

13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019

Mr. Huang Xia, United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region;

Mr. Andrew Gilmour, United Nations Assistant-Secretary-General for Human Rights;

Ambassador Zachary Muburi-Muita, Executive Secretary International Conference for Great Lakes Region;

Fellow Ministers of Justice,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Excellencies, Ambassadors, and Members of the Diplomatic Corp,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to Kenya.

Kenya is privileged to host this High-Level Regional Consultation on Justice and Good Governance that brings together Ministers of Justice from the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region together with distinguished guests from various international, regional and national bodies.

The Great Lakes Region has experienced pockets of violence and instances of political instability. This has led to the critical examination of the root causes

of conflict with the aim of reducing and eventually ending violence within our borders. In some instances, violence has spilt over to the neighboring countries; as a result, the problem ceases being of one country but a regional concern. When that happens, the problem ceases to be that of one country alone and becomes a regional concern. It is for this reason that our respective countries come together at a forum such as this to address issues, weaknesses and challenges that contribute to violence; systemically, structurally and institutionally. It requires a holistic approach.

The fight against impunity requires the concerted efforts of our countries; we need to establish strong institutions that are equipped to fight the impunities bedeviling us as they remain a threat to the security of the region.

As the Nobel Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú, once said;

*“Without strong watchdog institutions, impunity becomes the very foundation upon which systems of corruption are built. And if impunity is not demolished, all efforts to bring an end to corruption are in vain. “*

Impunity is not only manifested in corruption but takes different forms. When impunity is not addressed, we risk as a continent having a crisis that necessitates the international community to come to our rescue.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Africa has the ability of averting crisis through consultations with one another; these consultations, this forum included, come up with solutions aimed at helping us strengthen our institutions at the national level in turn ensuring that peace and security in the region is secured.

Strong institutions are also key in protecting and upholding the human rights of our citizens. Respect for human rights can only be possible where there is respect to the rule of law. We must, therefore, strive to ensure that we have strong systems that promote the rule of law within the region. This is in line the set objectives of the region that focus on accountability and strengthened infrastructures for peace and human rights across the region.

**Esteemed Delegates,**

I recognize and appreciate the commitment of governments represented here by your presence. Martin Luther King Jr. once opined;

*“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”*

Your efforts in the course of the three days will be important in ensuring that the Great Lakes Region makes important strides towards stability.

Allow me to appreciate at this point the assistance of the United Nations towards the development of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. This is an agreement that encompasses commitments at the national, regional and international levels geared towards addressing the root causes of conflict and ending the recurring cycles of violence especially within Eastern DRC and the Great Lakes region.

The region has since developed the Regional Strategic Framework to aid in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Regional Strategic Framework was validated at a meeting held on 7 December 2015 in Nairobi.

The Regional Strategic Framework seeks end the culture of impunity through the apprehension and prosecution of the perpetrators of violence. The proposed transformational and integrated approach will require strengthening of the mechanisms of justice, enhancing the capacity of local governance institutions to deliver services, as well as addressing the occurrence of violence and holding perpetrators to account using both traditional and formal mechanisms.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Progress achieved so far should facilitate a powerful advance towards sustainable peace. We hope to achieve much more through continued collaboration and earnest support for forums such as this one that provides us with comparative lessons which we can all learn from.

I note that during this conference, we will be addressing the thorny issue of sexual and gender-based violence. The perpetrators of impunity have persistently taken advantage of weak judicial systems in the region to perpetrate human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence. Our objective as governments is to create a peaceful and stable region that is devoid of sexual and gender-based violence. A region where women, girls and vulnerable members of society are empowered to participate in peacebuilding and economic development and enjoy equitable access to the benefits of sustainable development.

It is my hope and prayer that we will come up with a favorable declaration and roadmap that will guide our future efforts in maintaining peace and stability by promoting access to justice and promoting and protecting human rights.

Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to finish my opening remarks with the words of Franklin Roosevelt,

*“Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose. To that high concept there can be no end, save victory.”*

I wish us all productive deliberations within the course of the next three days as we strive to achieve our common objectives of ensuring security, stability, and development in the region.

It is therefore my humble duty to declare this Conference officially opened.

**I THANK YOU.**