

**GREAT LAKES JUDICIAL COOPERATION
NETWORK MEETING**

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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**SPEKE RESORT, MUNYONYO, KAMPALA,
UGANDA**

12TH NOVEMBER, 2018

KAREN KRAMER, UNODC

THE REP OF THE AMBASSADOR OF NORWAY

**THE REP OF THE UN SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE
SG FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

**THE REP OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
ICGLR**

ATTORNEYS GENERAL

PROSECUTORS GENERAL

DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

DIPLOMATS

PROSECUTORS

LAWYERS

MILITARY AND POLICE OFFICERS

CIVIL SOCIETY

WILDLIFE CONSERVATIONISTS

THE MEDIA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

On behalf of the government of Uganda, on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and on my own behalf, I extend a special welcome to you all.

Welcome to Uganda.

Thank you for choosing Uganda to host this very important meeting of the network of Judicial Cooperation of the Great Lakes Region.

The Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network is a network like no other. It is unique in a number of ways.

It is much wider than the East African Community yet much smaller than the African Union, as far as the number of countries involved, is concerned. It is a network of some very similar and homogenous countries. Countries like Uganda and Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi, they share a lot in common.

Majority of these countries share the Swahili language in its various dialects and

Yet it is a network of very diverse countries. In this small network we have English, French and Portuguese. We have both Civil law systems and common law systems.

In that sense it is a network of unity amidst diversity. One of the factors that makes the Great

Lakes region unique in Africa, and indeed the entire world, is the abundance of wildlife and its diversity.

From the giant elephants and rhinos to the proud cat family of the lion and leopard to the lowly, rare and shy pangolin, to the abundant bird species in all their majesty. Not to mention the water inhabitants, the hippos, crocodiles and fish.

Not every country or region is endowed with wildlife in this abundance, or at all. Moldova.

This abundance and diversity of wildlife species, however, is under serious threat. Never before in the history of this region, has there been such a serious threat to our wildlife than it is now.

Illegal trade in wildlife species is a multi-billion dollar industry. It is lucrative and therefore the actors are ready for a do or die adventure.

Previously weapons used in illegal wildlife trade were bows, arrows, spears and various trap contraptions.

Today's poacher and smuggler and illegal wildlife dealer is armed with machine guns that can do so much damage in so short a time. It is a life and death matter for both humans and wildlife.

A casual observer would be right to wonder what law enforcement officers and diplomats assembled

in the confines of an air conditioned hotel room far away from the wildlife habitats would be doing discussing tackling illegal wildlife trade.

The intersection between wildlife, illegal trade and the judicial system rotate around the word impunity. The judicial system is entrusted with the duty to end impunity. Ending impunity guarantees deterrence. Deterrence breeds a law abiding citizenry. This is true not only for wildlife crime but for all crimes across the board.

The law must be in place to punish illegal wildlife trade. I believe the law is in place. The existing law must be enforced in order punish and deter. Over time, the judicial system has woken up to the reality that punishment through incarceration for economically motivated crimes like illegal wildlife trade, is not punishment enough. It is not a sufficient deterrent.

Since these crimes are economically motivated, the most effective tool against the perpetrators is dealing them heavy economic blows, hence asset recovery. In addition to incarceration the judicial system must ensure that all the wealth gained from these illegal activities and even more must be recovered and forfeited.

This is the language the perpetrators of economic crimes like illegal wildlife trade understand and respect. This is what will end impunity.

It is my hope that the delegates will follow up the action points agreed on in Dar. It is my hope that each country has appointed a focal point person for this network. It is also my hope that the focal point people will meet and exchange contacts and vital information on matters pending in each other's jurisdictions.

Those seemingly small things and exchanges between countries are what make the network tick!

Each of these countries represented here could do this on their own. But as our hero Nelson Mandela is quoted to have said, if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far go together.

In any case, the mountain gorillas don't know the border between Uganda, DRC and Rwanda. The elephants don't know that there is a border between Uganda and DRC or Kenya and Tanzania.

The illegal wildlife traders know about the borders but completely disregard and disrespect them. They exploit the borders for their own benefit.

Why then should we in law enforcement use the borders as an impediment to ending impunity? We should instead be among the very first group of

people to take advantage of these borders for the benefit of ending impunity.

I am glad that the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network was set up for this very reason.

Allow me to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Great Lakes Region Office, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Embassy of Norway in Uganda, the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Uganda, and all of you delegates for taking of your valuable resources of money and time to ensure the success of this meeting.

For the sake of our intricately intertwined destiny between human and wildlife, Let us go together so that we can go farther.

I say all this For God and Our Country.

Now, I gladly declare the 3rd meeting of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network officially open.

Thank you.