



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

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**Outcome Document –Round Table / Session 2**

***“The Prevention of all forms of Violence Against Women and their Protection”***

**11 August 2020**

1. On 11 August 2020, the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (GLR), in coordination with countries of the region, Guarantors of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework (UN, AU, SADC, ICGLR), and the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in the GLR, convened a virtual consultation to discuss the challenges associated in ensuring ‘*The Prevention of all forms of Violence Against Women and their Protection*’, including ways to address impunity and reparations for victims of violence, within the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants included women leaders of the Advisory Board, ICGLR Executive Secretariat and its Fora, relevant UN entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), regional and international partners, advocates, experts and academics, and members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), as reflected at Annex A.
2. The event was part of an ongoing series of consultative roundtable dialogues on the WPS Agenda in the region. It took place following a meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on the GLR on 11 June 2020, and the adoption on 1 July 2020 of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2532 (2020), which “*calls for concrete actions to minimize this impact and ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in the development and implementation of an adequate and sustainable response to the pandemic*”.
3. The event aimed to (i) take stock of Violence against Women and Girls and emerging trends during the COVID-19 pandemic, (ii) highlight lessons learned, best practices and challenges, and (iii) identify actionable and sustainable response to the pandemic.

**Opening Statements and Regional Overview**

4. In his opening remarks, the Special Envoy welcomed participants and acknowledged their role in what he viewed as joint efforts in addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), women’s protection and rights. He noted with grave concern the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on many women and girls, who have been affected by violence, and stressed the need to strengthen their protection. He reiterated the importance of the appeal launched by the UN Secretary General for the establishment of emergency warning systems. In this regard, he congratulated the DRC for



launching on 3 August 2020 a toll-free number for assistance in cases of sexual or physical assault throughout the country. The Envoy also stressed the importance of strengthening financial and technical support for reforming the judicial systems and upholding of human rights, notably by integrating SGBV into the national planning mechanisms and by allocating resources for prevention. He further reiterated his support for ending impunity and strengthening the zero-tolerance campaign by increasing the involvement of men.

5. Madam Denise Tshisekedi, First Lady of the DRC, in her capacity as UNFPA Ambassador for the fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), commended the PBC in supporting efforts for the consolidation of peace and security in the GLR, and welcomed the opportunity to be involved in such an important event for women across the region. She stressed that the fight against SGBV should not be the exclusive responsibility of one category of people, and that it requires collective endeavours, with prevention being the best approach. She highlighted her concern over the slow process of implementation of resolutions and commitments by stakeholders, the high levels of insecurity caused by armed groups, and the low level of resources allocated to conflict resolution. In moving forward she advocated for the search for new and innovative ways for greater awareness raising initiatives through the media and youth networks, and improved support to survivors of SGBV, as well as facilitating their access to justice. In concluding, she called for new, effective and immediate solutions in addressing SGBV and offered her appreciation to the organisers of the consultative process.

6. Madam Liberata Mula Mula, Senior Representative of the Advisory Board for WPS; Senator Mutula Kilonzo (Kenya) and Madam Pramila Pattern, UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, also addressed the meeting during the opening session. In their comments they stressed the fact that the pandemic amplifies gender inequalities and encouraged stakeholders to focus on: political commitments and ensuring that national legislative frameworks integrate provisions for protection, access to justice and the right to reparations for the victims and increasing capacity building for responding to SGBV to all service providers; improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; increasing the role of CSOs, notably women led organizations, in COVID-19 response efforts. Madam Pattern further stressed the importance of the WPS agenda during this COVID period, which present a significant threat to the maintenance of peace and security, and reflected on the fact that the pandemic has shown that no crisis is gender neutral and no effective response can be gender-blind.

7. The opening session was followed by a presentation by Madam Eunice Musiime, Executive Director of Akina Mama Wa Africa; Dr. Sadiq Syed (UNWOMEN) on the effective protection and recovery strategies for SGBV survivors, respectively.

## **Discussions**

8. All participants agreed on the need for prevention from all forms of Violence Against Women and their protection to be a central pillar in advancing rule of law in the region. The continued presence of armed groups, who are recognized as major perpetrators of SGBV, coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to an increase in domestic violence, calls for simultaneous action in addressing both negative forces as well as the impact of the COVID- 19.

9. The roundtable consultative meeting addressed the following three thematic areas:

***Effective protection and recovery strategies for SGBV survivors***

10. Participants noted that the pandemic had exposed the increased and disproportionate vulnerabilities of women and girls. They noted that SGBV's impact on women and girls was intersectional and hence overlapping, thereby limiting the effective availability of SGBV services.

***Recommendations***

- *Strengthen the leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls in all decision-making processes in addressing the COVID-19 outbreak.*
- *Strengthen the inclusion and consultation of women in the design and implementation process of programmes for recovery and strategies for protection from SGBV.*
- *Ensure the intersectionality of the responses to SGBV by strengthening multi-sectoral response mechanisms, including economic empowerment, care provision, participation of survivors in policy formulation and access to SGBV services.*

***Supporting the creation, adoption and enforcement of legal frameworks that outlaw domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence***

11. It was noted that the justice system across the Great Lakes Region has demonstrated its limits during the pandemic, due to reduced court operations, early release of prisoners due to the implementation of measures aimed at containing the spread of infection and reducing prison populations.

***Recommendations***

- *Facilitate online training for lawyers and support staff for legal clinic on the treatment of SGBV.*
- *Great Lakes Member States to update their emergency responses mechanisms by setting up early warning systems and provide legal services nearer to the survivors.*
- *Provide support to the ICGLR to document all instances of violence against women.*
- *Call for a special campaign on justice for women.*

***Integrating the fight against SGBV and other crimes into peace and security mechanisms***

12. Participants noted that SGBV is a criminal act, and a peace and security issue, as stipulated in several resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and in regional normative frameworks. The exponential increase of SGBV cases perpetrated by intimate partners during the COVID-19 pandemic was of great concern to the meeting leading to a discussion on possible way forward.

***Recommendations***

- *Regional and international players to increase support to civil society for community (mass) sensitization against SGBV, capacity building and strategic communication.*
- *Improve gender-specific analysis via regular collection of disaggregated data on SGBV and perceptions of security (disaggregated data will support clearer identification and*

*monitoring of the prevalence and patterns of violence thus providing evidence for informed interventions).*

- *Establish One-Stop centers within communities to serve as support and information hubs on SGBV, especially for the survivors.*

### ***Positive Masculinity***

13. Participants noted that a multi-level approach (individual, community, institutional, national, and international) is instrumental in addressing SGBV. Moreover, they also agreed that changing individual behavior, educating men, mobilizing communities and reforming institutional response, especially the justice system, are vital strategies for reinforcing positive masculinity.

#### ***Recommendations***

- *Implement community-based initiatives with men and boys, as well as with women and girls, which promotes new ideals of manhood based on respect for women, responsible sexual behavior, and the non-use of gender-based violence.*
- *Integrate comprehensive gender and sexuality into national curricula in the region.*

### ***The role of research in designing, inclusion and implementation of programmes for recovery and strategies for protection from SGBV***

14. Participants noted that research is fundamental for use in inclusive implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and gender responsive recovery interventions in the region. Additionally, participants stressed that research enabled the region to understand the political, economic, socio-cultural, religious causes of SGBV. It was further proposed that research would enable gathering of evidence with a view to changing social norms.

#### ***Recommendations***

- *Promote gender responsive programmes and recovery plans, through quantitative and qualitative rapid socio-economic and SGBV assessments.*
- *Strengthen the inclusion of women in early monitoring and warning mechanisms of violence, through the creation of women's feedback mechanisms.*
- *Develop a training module on capacity development and a communication strategy, with messages and tools for social transformation*

### ***Access to SGBV Services***

15. The meeting was briefed by a survivor of SGBV, and representatives of the ICGLR Youth Forum and a regional media network against SGBV, who drew attention to the suffering experienced by the many unheard voices. They advocated for zero tolerance on impunity and mechanisms to be put in-place that supports the survivors, including provision of legal support and, social reintegration that allows them to regain their inner dignity, and be given the opportunity to be part of the search for solutions

#### ***Recommendations***

- *Promote a sustainable community -centred approach involving local structures to ensure reintegration and empowerment of survivors.*
- *Empower the regional media networks to continue to create awareness and educate the community on the prevention and fight against SGBV.*
- *Use a women rights approach to increase advocacy channels on issues regarding SGBV.*
- *Build the capacity of journalists and media owners, to move beyond reporting about the numbers in the context of SGBV, and give more, analytical and critical coverage at the national and regional level.*

## **Note of Appreciation**

16. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Office of the Special Envoy, the PSC-Framework Guarantors and the Advisory Board for WPS in the GLR for convening and facilitating this important meeting in preparation for the upcoming PBC meeting on WPS.

Done in Nairobi  
11 August 2020