

Written submission to the ambassadors of the countries of the Great Lakes

(With the expression of our highest consideration)

Regarding: the situation of the regional centre

1. Introduction to the regional centre

The Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women, Gender and Peace-building in the Great Lakes Region (CERED-GL) was established in 2010 by 11 countries of the Great Lakes region: Angola, Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. It works under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and is a UNESCO category 2 centre. These States and institutions are all members of the governing board, which has already met three times in Kinshasa (in 2011, 2012 and 2013) to deliberate on the operations of the regional centre.

The goal of CERED-GL is to *“promote the protection and respect of women’s rights and gender equality in the Great Lakes region”*. As such, the centre represents, among other things, a mechanism for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 in the Great Lakes region.

The tasks assigned to CERED-GL, as set out in its constitution, are as follows:

- 1) To lead and coordinate research on policy formulation and dialogue between researchers and policymakers;
- 2) To strengthen capacity for research on the three themes of the centre (women’s rights, gender promotion and the culture of peace);
- 3) To create a network between the national centres and with the regional centre;
- 4) To develop partnerships;
- 5) To produce publications on the three themes of the centre;
- 6) To progressively build a documentation centre and database on the three themes of the centre.

CERED-GL comprises the following bodies: the governing board, the scientific council and the secretariat, which is responsible for the daily management of the centre under the leadership of a general manager.

2. Outputs of the regional centre

The outputs of the centre can be summarized as follows: participation in scientific and policy meetings, organization of scientific meetings and, lastly, undertaking of studies and research.

Participation in scientific and policy meetings

1. Global forum of francophone women, Kinshasa, 3 and 4 March 2014
2. Rift Valley Institute regional conference, Nairobi, 12 and 13 March 2014
3. Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Bangui, 24–27 March 2014
4. Forum of Parliaments of ICGLR, Goma-Bukavu, 24–27 June 2014
5. Regional workshop on “the role of gender equality observatories in the post-2015 agenda”, Dakar, 16 and 17 April 2014
6. Extraordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 22 September 2014
7. The first “scientific days” held by the research and information centre and the first “scientific days” held on the empowerment of women in the Great Lakes region, on the theme “Research opportunities, challenges and agenda”
8. 16 days of activism with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
9. Forum for ownership of new national and international instruments relevant to the status of women
10. Regional meeting of partners from the countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in Yaoundé
11. Signing of the headquarters agreement
12. Workshop on gender integration in the mining sector
13. Workshop on the presentation of legislation on women’s rights and the implementation modalities for gender parity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: opportunities in the struggle of Congolese women

Organization of scientific meetings

1. Open forum on the International Criminal Court, Kinshasa, 22 July 2014
2. CERED-GL information and strategic orientation workshop, Kinshasa, August 2014
3. Implementation workshop on the national strategy to combat gender-based violence, Kinshasa, 12 September 2014
4. Political dialogue seminar on the theme “Peace, security and reconstruction in the Great Lakes region”, Kinshasa, 25–28 September 2014
5. Forum on political leadership in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
6. Municipal conference on inclusive and sustainable development at the local level
7. Scientific meetings on “the future of human mobility patterns and identity 2050”
8. Workshop on female entrepreneurship in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kinshasa, 26 October 2016
9. Workshop on the production of an alternative report on the decade of the African woman in December 2016

Undertaking studies and research

1. Study on the state of girls' education and professional training of women in francophone countries
2. Study on the state of implementation of the national strategy to combat gender-based violence
3. Research programme on "Democratic Republic of the Congo – the Nursery: programme on adolescent girls"
4. Survey on the professional activities of women heads of households
5. Study on the classification and mapping of gender-based violence
6. Project supporting the integration of the gender dimension and of gender-based violence in university training and research
7. Methodology workshop on the revision of the national strategy to combat gender-based violence in September 2016
8. Quantitative survey of the nursery programme
9. Revision of the national strategy to combat gender-based violence
10. Women's political participation in DRC; evaluation of training organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation
11. Status of gender issues in the countries of the Great Lakes (work under way)
12. Integration of gender in the academic world

3. Difficulties encountered

In carrying out the tasks assigned to it under its constitution, CERED-GL encountered a number of difficulties, the main being a lack of member States' ownership of CERED-GL, resulting in:

- a) Non-payment of contributions by member States, apart from prompt payment by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This situation is depriving the centre of the resources it requires to function.
- b) Lack of awareness of CERED-GL in its member States and lack of outreach by CERED-GL. CERED-GL is not recognized as the lead authority on women and gender issues in the subregion, despite its constitution preparing it for that role.
- c) Lack of communication between CERED-GL and associated national centres. In order to better fulfil its mandate, CERED-GL requires the support of the national centres. However, some countries do not have a national centre, while others have centres that are ineffective.
- d) Disruption of consultative meetings of ministers responsible for gender in the Great Lakes region as a whole. As a reminder, CERED-GL was established on the initiative of ministers responsible for gender. It would have been preferable to institutionalize these ministerial meetings to ensure real ownership of the centre by member States.

- e) Lack of value accorded to gender research in member States. Irrespective of the centre's existence, although several studies have been carried out in the Great Lakes subregion, they are little-known, which leads to the assumption that nothing is being done in terms of studies in these countries.
- f) Ineffective nature of the governing board and complete lack of a scientific council. The meetings of the governing board have not been held regularly, the last having been held in 2013. This situation affects the centre's operations, especially as the governing board is the centre's highest authority in terms of planning, direction and supervision. In addition, the centre is working without the scientific council even having been established.

4. *Suggested solutions*

In the light of the above-mentioned difficulties, the matter requires further consideration in order to resolve the problems in the subregion related to women's rights, gender promotion and the culture of peace. Ownership by member States is of the utmost importance in the relaunch of CERED-GL. More specifically, that ownership will translate, on the one hand, into the provision of operating resources through the payment of contributions by member States and, on the other hand, into effective linkages between the regional centre and the national centres.

The provision of funding by member States will, among other things:

- a) Enable the recruitment of staff in all the member States;
- b) Facilitate the establishment of the scientific council, whose importance to the functioning of a research centre is evident;
- c) Ensure the regularity of meetings of the governing board as well as of consultative meetings of ministers responsible for gender in the Great Lakes region as a whole;
- d) Facilitate communication between CERED-GL and associated national centres;
- e) Help to increase the value accorded to research carried out in member States on women, gender and the culture of peace.