



CIVIL SOCIETY STRONGLY URGES THE HEADS OF STATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR) TO BE AT THE FRONTLINE OF THE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND TO:

1. Declare **Zero Tolerance Now** on SGBV crimes and impunity

Women and children in the Great Lakes Region have suffered for long from sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in both conflict and peace settings. Recent trends indicate that cases of SGBV are on the rise despite all the legal and policy frameworks on SGBV prevention, protection of vulnerable groups and punishment of perpetrators. Governments must move from rhetoric to action. We are concerned about the escalation of SGBV practices by both armed groups and law enforcement agents who are responsible for the protection of citizens.

Since SGBV is an acknowledged human rights abuse that violates numerous human rights instruments at national, regional and international levels, governments are urged to commit themselves to immediate decisive actions for ending SGBV crimes and impunity, and promoting accountability. The human rights of all women and children must be protected, including the rights to be free from violence, coercion, fear and impunity. All stakeholders are urged to press their Governments for the immediate domestication of the ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children (2006), particularly Articles 3, 4 and 5.

2. Allocate specific and adequate **funding for SGBV prevention programmes** within a Gender Responsive Budgeting Framework

Although there is usually an increase of SGBV incidences during conflict, more can be done outside conflict settings not only to assist survivors of SGBV but also to address the underlying social, cultural and political drivers of SGBV. In order to do this, substantial and sustained investments are required beyond conflict situations. The ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children provides for the establishment of "legal and medical procedures for assisting the victims and survivors of sexual violence, and a fund for sensitizing the perpetrators on the wrongfulness of their sexual behaviour" (Article 6(7)). It also provides for the possible creation of "a special facility under the fund for reconstruction and development, the purpose of which shall be to provide social and legal assistance, medical treatment, counseling, training, rehabilitation and reintegration of the survivors and victims of sexual violence, including those who may not be able to identify the perpetrators of sexual violence" (Article 6 (8)). Article 6(9) calls for the setting up of "a special regional facility for training and sensitizing judicial officers, police units, social workers, medical officers, and other categories of persons who handle cases of sexual violence in the Great Lakes Region". All

these provisions need to be urgently implemented by Governments if SGBV is to be prevented, and survivors' needs addressed.

3. Institutionalise early warning and response to SGBV, including **community policing**

We urge Governments to implement and strengthen community policing strategies that empower communities to partner with security forces to improve security and safety against crime, particularly sexual gender based violence. Through this model, communities are empowered to know their rights and encouraged to report cases of sexual gender based violence. The community policing system should also enable the police to get early warning information on threats of sexual and gender based violence. Strong police-community relations can greatly enhance the maintenance of law and order, prevention and response to SGBV. The inclusion of women officers is critical to sustainable community-policing models aimed at stamping out SGBV.

4. Establish an independent **Regional Impunity Monitoring Unit** by the next Summit of the Heads of State, to thereafter report on progress annually to the ICGLR Ordinary Summit of Heads of State

Great Lakes countries have a long history of impunity regarding SGBV, particularly in conflict situations. Although judicial systems have registered significant progress in most of the countries of the Great Lakes Region, impunity for past and current crimes remains deeply entrenched, preventing the consolidation of the rule of law and the construction of an accountable society. There is a need to identify the factors that drive impunity and obstruct access to justice and accountability. The establishment of sustainable SGBV monitoring and reporting mechanisms are a vital step in the fight against SGBV.

One of the objectives of the ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children is to "provide protection for women and children against the impunity of sexual violence in the specific context of the Great Lakes Region." We therefore call for the immediate establishment of an independent **Regional Impunity Monitoring Unit** to monitor and sustainably address SGBV in the States of the Great Lakes Region.

5. Establish national **Reparation Funds** for survivors of SGBV by the next ICGLR Ordinary Summit of Heads of State

This recommendation is guided by the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Basic Principles and

Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2005, the ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children and the Conference Communiqué of the Pan African Conference on Ending Impunity for Sexual and Gender Based Violence, 21-23 July 2008, which came up with the Nairobi Declaration on the Right of Women and Girls to a Remedy and Reparation.

We urge the Governments of the Great Lakes Region to establish national Reparation Funds for survivors of SGBV by the next ICGLR Ordinary Summit of Heads of State. The concept of reparation should be a transformative and participative process. This should ensure that the process goes a long way in resolving the problem of delivering justice through reparation programmes for victims and survivors of sexual violence, particularly in conflict situations.

6. Adopt a **comprehensive SGBV performance framework** (in the form of an Index or Barometer) with clear standards and targets, with opportunities for civil society to present shadow or parallel reports

It is commonly recognised that there is a significant gap between the various national, regional, continental and international SGBV legal and policy frameworks and the implementation in various countries of the Great Lakes Region. Unless the political will and commitment reflected in adopting all these frameworks is accompanied by an anti-SGBV performance framework with a systematic monitoring, evaluation and reporting system, significant parts of the legal and policy frameworks risk not being implemented.

We therefore urge the ICGLR Secretariat to assist this process by developing a **comprehensive SGBV performance framework** (in the form of an Index or Barometer) with clear standards and targets to be met over regular specific periods. The barometer would serve as a benchmarking tool towards the realisation of the targets set. A regular independent analysis drawing on country reports, authored by independent researchers and experts if possible, with opportunity for civil society to present shadow or parallel reports, should strengthen and provide strong legitimacy to this accountable process.

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