



The Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region - Goma, 18th June 2008 –

We, the participants from different government ministries and departments of the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) together with civil society organizations, religious and traditional leaders, international non-governmental organizations, development partners and the United Nations (UN) agencies attending the High Level Regional Consultation on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region held at IHUSI Hotel, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), from the 16th to 18th June 2008,

Having listened to the testimonies from the field by representatives of civil society organizations, women organizations, and traditional and religious leaders, as well as presentations from representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the Vice- Governor of Goma, DRC, the United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUC), the Deputy Commander of the 8th Military Region of North Kivu, and having viewed documentaries on the horrifying stories of sexual violence and exploitation of women and children,

Reaffirming the provisions of regional and international human rights instruments that protect women and children, such as the United Nations Charter (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1612 (2005), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the General Recommendation 19 on Violence Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2000), the Rome Statute (2002), The Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on Illicit Proliferation, circulation and Trafficking on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2000), The Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light weapons (2004) and the World Health Organization Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies,

Convinced that the ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children and the ICGLR Project on Prevention and Fight Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Gender-Based Violence and Assistance to the Victims provide efficient and adequate framework for the prevention and fight against SGBV, and the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators of sexual violence in the Great Lakes Region,

Aware of the conditions that breed sexual violence and impunity, such as persistent wars, insecurity, harmful cultural practices, discrimination, corruption and inadequate legal systems in some countries of the Great Lakes Region,

Aware that the percentage of victims, in particular child victims, of sexual violence is alarmingly increasing in some countries of the Great Lakes Region,

Deeply concerned by the pandemic of SGBV and violations of the human rights of prominently women and children, and pervasive impunity in the Great Lakes Region for cases related to sexual violence and exploitation,

Bearing in mind the responsibility of the State to protect its citizens from human rights violations, including SGBV,

Aware that SGBV represents a threat to national and regional peace and security, and the propagation of HIV/AIDS,

Acknowledging the cost of SGBV on the economic and sustainable development of the countries of the Great Lakes Region,

Aware that SGBV is not only related to crisis situations and war,

Aware that SGBV is not only committed by armed elements but increasingly by civilians as well,

Convinced that the situation in the Great Lake Region is very complex and special and that all survivors despite their social, political status including the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees need protection, justice and rehabilitation,

Aware that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated the problem of SGBV in the region,

Determined to work with and influence our respective governments and organizations to contribute to the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, and to take appropriate measures for empowerment and equal representation of women and girls,

Convinced that the struggle to end SGBV entails a combined effort of men, women, boys and girls, and all state institutions,

Recommend as follows:

At the national level:

- 1- Member States to allocate funds from the national budget to projects related to the prevention of SGBV and assistance to survivors, strengthening of institutions working on SGBV,
- 2- Member States to strengthen their judicial systems through training the judiciary in SGBV issues, revising discriminatory laws, simplifying procedures for lodging complaints, providing free legal services to victims, fighting corruption and the trivialization of sexual violence cases,
- 3- Member States to ensure that during trial of SGBV cases criminal procedural guarantees of effective prosecution, confidentiality, closed court proceedings and protection of victims and witnesses are taken into account,
- 4- Member States to strengthen medical structures in order to facilitate the provision of medical certificates that are necessary for timely hearing of SGBV cases,
- 5- Member States to support mobile, legal clinics and medical centres to facilitate free access to medical, legal and psycho-social services,
- 6- Member States to create a vetting mechanism to screen out candidates for official positions in the army, police or other security services who have a past record of human rights abuses including SGBV,
- 7- Member States to ensure that all the actors, human rights activists and local NGOs fighting for the advancement of women's rights, including fighting against SGBV, are protected and able to work in safety and security and also to create an environment that encourages their work,
- 8- Member States to decentralize services at the grassroots levels for SGBV victims and their families so that they can receive free legal and medical assistance, including the morning-after-pills, counseling to overcome trauma, and socio-

- economic assistance, including food, shelter, ARV, and other HIV/AIDS infection and STD related assistance,
- 9- Member States to ensure that specific and sufficient medical kits for all victims, especially children, are made available in all health facilities,
 - 10- Member States to ensure special training for all the actors in relation to the specific needs of minors, particularly very young girls and boys victims of sexual violence, in medical care, trauma management and legal assistance,
 - 11- Member States to train police, army, prisons, medical personnel, and social workers in trauma management and sensitivity to victims in handling sexual violence cases,
 - 12- Member states to provide specialized and professional training for police, prosecutorial and judicial staff on gathering evidence (including forensic evidence) and prosecutorial guarantees on cases of sexual violence.
 - 13- Member states to establish protection mechanism for victims and witnesses who are willing to testify in courts against alleged perpetrators,
 - 14- Member States to undertake sustained public awareness, targeting women, men girls, boys and the community on their rights and responsibilities and on programmes of assistance available to victims of SGBV in languages and formats that are accessible to the people at the grass roots and to civil societies,
 - 15- Member States to put in place a national media strategy for sustainable use of electronic and print media especially radios, newspapers, television and community/traditional based means to expose the atrocities of sexual violence, and facilitate the sensitization and fight against SGBV,
 - 16- Develop and implement programmes for behavioral change and rehabilitation of imprisoned perpetrators of sexual violence in accordance with juvenile justice procedures for child perpetrators,
 - 17- Member States to establish a Committee for the Protection of Women and Children from sexual violence to ensure follow up, dissemination and implementation of the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children,

- 18- Member States to establish a Reparation Fund to assist victims of SGBV and put in place a Reparation Commission to handle sexual violence claims,
- 19- Enact and when necessary amend laws to conform to the ICGLR Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, ,
- 20- Strengthen or set up Gender Desks or Special Units at all prisons, police and military units with both male and female police and military officers trained to handle SGBV, with functions of *securization*, prevention and effective prosecution of SGBV cases,
- 21- Strengthen or set up Child Protection Units at all police and military stations, and have Child Protection Focal Points in all stages of the civilian and military justice system,,
- 22- Systematize data collection to strengthen the evidence base on the extent of SGBV and experiences of women, girls and young boys, as well as existing social, political, economic and legal measures in place,
- 23- Member States should not grant amnesty, pardon or grant conditional release to the perpetrators of SGBV, and a maximum sentence should be imposed in all cases,
- 24- Member States to support the implementation of a gender equality program aiming to transform the relationship between women and men in a sustainable and equitable manner, involving traditional and religious leaders, as well as women leaders at the grass-root level. ,
- 25- Member States to include prevention of SGBV in the curricula of schools and other learning institutions to enable young boys and girls to grow in a more conscious and sensitive environment,
- 26- Member States to put in place effective measures to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons within the countries in the region,
- 27- Member States to ensure that DDR processes facilitate access to girls, boys and women associated with armed groups so as to promote responsiveness to children and women in the reintegration programmes,
- 28- Member States to ensure that all girls and women abducted and kept as wives/sex slaves are released and reunified with their families,

29- Member states to initiate economic support for the benefit of SGBV and other vulnerable survivors.

At the regional level:

30- Follow up with a view to speeding up the process of stabilization and peace consolidation in the Great Lakes Region through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of illegal armed groups in the region in conformity with agreements such as the Nairobi Communiqué (2007) and the Goma *Act d'Engagement* (2008),

31- Urge those Member States that have not done so, to ratify the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region,

32- Member States to domesticate the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children by reforming the Penal Codes to provide stiff punishment for crimes related to SGBV,

33- Member States to review discriminatory laws and provisions incompatible with effective implementation of the Protocol,

34- Member States to engage themselves and ensure cooperation in criminal matters related to SGBV,

35- Pursuant to article 6.8 of the Protocol, Member States to create a regional facility, under the Special Fund for Reconstruction and Development, to prevent SGBV and assist survivors specifically in the area of training, legal assistance, medical treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors of sexual violence, including the perpetrators of SGBV,

36- Pursuant to article 6.9 of the Protocol, Member States to put in place a special regional facility for training and sensitizing judicial officers, police and military units, social workers, medical officers and all others who handle SGBV issues,

37- Member States to facilitate high level consultations on the fight against SGBV for high ranking military and police officials of the Great Lakes Region,

38- With the assistance of the United Nations, Member States to facilitate regional consultations on the fight against SGBV for traditional, religious and women leaders,

39- Member States to take measures to stop child trafficking and child prostitution in the Great Lakes Region by specifically addressing cross border regional networks that facilitate child trafficking,

40- Member States to put in place legislative and policy mechanisms to respond to vulnerabilities of children born out of rape and to women with pregnancy from rape by giving the opportunity to those who want to keep the pregnancy to benefit from maternal assistance and to those who do not, to be allowed to abort,

At the international level (Development partners and United Nations):

41- To provide financial and technical assistance to strengthen legal, judicial and medical response capacities to eradicate SGBV and end impunity in line with the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children and other international and regional instruments,

42- Mobilize international political and financial support for the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region and its related Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children,

43- Promote the harmonization of international initiatives on SGBV in relation to national and regional contexts,

44- Provide financial resources and technical capacities to the Conference Secretariat of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to facilitate the coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children and the ICGLR Project on Prevention and Fight Against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Gender-Based Violence and Assistance to the Victims,

45- The United Nations and peacekeeping missions to assist governments to have sustainable legal, policy and institutional mechanisms and human resources to ensure continuity in the fight against SGBV,

46- Ensure the deployment of an adequate peacekeeping force and the enforcement of their protection mandate,

- 47- Establish specialized processes for SGBV in national judicial system and within transitional justice mechanisms to expedite prosecution of alleged perpetrators.
- 48- Support the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of responses to SGBV at national, regional and international levels
- 49- Support the strengthening of national, regional and international judicial systems to help ensure all suspected perpetrators of sexual violence are brought before justice and that judicial decisions and relevant sentences are executed.
- 50- Support and train peacekeeping forces in handling SGBV and other related cases

Done at IHUSI Hotel, Goma, DRC 18th June 2008
