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## Introduction

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## Introduction

The staff and management of the Centre for Conflict Management of the National University of Rwanda welcome the successful 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Pact with the theme: *'Democratisation Process in the Great Lakes Region: Progress and Challenges'*. This conference has been organized with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA-SAREC) from Sweden. It took place in Kigali Sports View Hotel on May 25-26, 2012.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2006, in Nairobi, Heads of State and Governments of the core Countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region<sup>1</sup> appended their signatures to the *Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region*.<sup>2</sup> The signing of the Pact engaged more than before the Heads of States and their respective people to actively work for peace and stability as an important milestone in the search for sustainable development within the Great Lakes Region. That is why five years after the operationalisation of the Pact, CCM organized this conference.

Both the background and the context of this conference are crucial. Aimed at assessing of the progress and best practices made in the area of Democratisation, strengthening the link between research and policy making in the areas of democratic initiatives, empowering women in conflicts transformation and increasing collaboration and partnership between governments, policy makers, civil society and academia in building sustainable peace and stability, and promoting democratic governance in the region, the 4<sup>th</sup> CCM conference on ICGLR comes timely for many reasons.

First, the conference comes in a period during which most of the African Great Lakes countries have undergone elections (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania). Secondly, since shortly after independence in 60's, it is commonly assumed that African countries in general and African great lakes region in particular caused many problems to the remaining world. It is only from the last decade that wrong realty changes with various african countries's initiatives : renewal of diplomatic, political and economic relations between Rwanda and DRC, solicitation from UN and AU of Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian troops for peacekeeping operations on Darfur, Ivory-Cost, Haiti and Somalia as well as the recent peaceful referendum in Southern Soudan.

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<sup>1</sup>The core countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region are the following: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Some of the neighbors of these core countries are considered as coopted Countries. A number of other Countries and Organizations are observers.

<sup>2</sup>The Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration, the Protocols, the Programs of Action, the Regional Follow up Mechanism and the Fund constitute integral parts of the Pact.

It is therefore obvious that in order to overcome a numerous challenges faced by the ICGLR member states, we should stand as a one. Therefore, Academic meetings like this one which bring together different researchers, policy makers as well as practitioners are more than welcome within the Region in general and in Rwanda particularly. This complementarity is reflected in the five subthemes which attracted the attention of speakers and participants at the conference are herein discussed in the most detailed way:

- *Electoral Experience: Opportunities and Challenges*
- *Gender Issues in Peace and Stability within ICGLR: Achievements and Stakes*
- *Conflicts Resolution within ICGLR: Impact assessment of domestic solutions and international mechanisms*
- *Peace and Civic Education as mode of lasting peace and Stability: Stakes and Prospects*
- *Social Sciences in Conflict Transformation and Peace Building*

In all aspects, this meeting, like the previous one in 2008, is neither an initiative from political arena nor backed by governmental pressure. Coming from academia, this conference led important resolutions that shall be implemented for the policy makers and practitioners. For a post-genocide country like Rwanda which is building on knowledge-based development, such conference is an indispensable tool to measure the role of home grown solutions to numerous of challenges left behind by the devastating genocide against Tutsi in 1994.

Furthermore, taking place in Rwanda, an epicentre of the instability in the Great Lakes Region following the 1994 genocide perpetrated against Tutsi, that conference is interesting in that it provides opportunity to assess progress and best practices for good Governance and modes of Sustainable Development within the ICGLR member States. Considering where the processes are coming from and given the current trends in post-conflict peace building and sustainable development through regional integration initiatives, none should ignore the step undertaken by ICGLR Member States.

We take the occasion to acknowledge that this 4<sup>th</sup> International conference on Great Lakes Region has brought out participants from various countries of Africa, Europe and America. We hope that a large readership expected to be in contact with debates and resolutions formulated herein will actively contribute to changing our region from an epicentre of conflicts to a source of best practice in post-crisis governance, sustainable peace and development.

