



*"The Parliamentary Diplomacy for Peace, Stability and sustainable Development in the Great Lakes Region".*

*"La Diplomatie parlementaire au service de Paix et de la Stabilité pour le Développement durable dans la Région des Grands Lacs ».*

**Final Communiqué of the Forum of Parliaments of the ICGLR at the end of the Working Visit of the Sitting President of the Forum in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Forum's Headquarters from 30th April to 4th May, 2015.**

The Forum of Parliaments of the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP/ICGLR) wishes to inform the public that the Sitting President of the Forum, the Rt. Hon. Sen. DAVID EKWEE ETHURO, EGH, EBS, MP, conducted a working visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and to the Forum's Headquarters from 30th April to 4th May 2015. The Sitting President was accompanied by a delegation from the Senate of Kenya;

During his working visit, the Sitting President:

1. Visited the Headquarters of the Forum in Kinshasa and held talks with the Secretary General and staff of the Forum of Parliaments of the ICGLR, the overall goal of the working visit being to strengthen the FP-ICGLR activities and visibility of the Forum;
2. Met and held wide-ranging talks with the Presidents of both Chambers of Parliament of the DRC, primarily on strengthening parliamentary diplomacy by and amongst Parliaments of the Member States of the FP-ICGLR, as well as bilateral relations between Kenya and the DRC. Further, during his meeting with His Excellency Léon Kengo wa Dondo, Rt. Hon. Speaker of the Senate of the DRC, the Sitting President was formally invited to visit and address the Senate of the DRC. The dates of the visit will be confirmed in due course;
3. Expressed thanks to the Government and Parliament of DRC for the facilitation granted to the Forum, and requested the host country to avail to the Forum its own premises as contained in the Headquarters Agreement between the Forum and the Government of DRC;
4. Expressed his determination to see the Parliamentarians of the ICGLR get more involved in the search for lasting solutions to the conflicts still plaguing the Great Lakes Region through the parliamentary diplomacy and using their common platform which is the Forum of Parliaments of the ICGLR;

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5. Extended warm invitations to the Presidents of both Chambers of Parliament of the DRC to visit the Parliament of Kenya, and, extending an invitation on behalf of the First Lady of Kenya, to attend the 9<sup>th</sup> Stop Cervical, Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference to be held in Nairobi between 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2015; and
6. Paid a courtesy call at the Embassy of the Republic of Kenya in Kinshasa, DRC, and conducted visits to the Symphony of Arts in Kinshasa, DRC, and the Lola ya Bonobo, a sanctuary that provides rescue, rehabilitation and lifetime care to bonobos orphaned by the illegal trade in endangered wildlife.

At the close of his visit, the Speaker of the Senate of Kenya and Sitting President of the FP-ICGLR;

***On bilateral relations between Kenya and the DRC:***

7. Appreciating the warm and cordial diplomatic relations that have existed between Kenya and the DRC since independence, particularly in the areas of peace and security, as well as trade and investments:
  - a) Notes with appreciation that efforts are at an advanced stage to conclude on an agreement to establish a Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC) between Kenya and the DRC, and to open consulates on a reciprocal basis, in Goma and Mombasa. These measures will go a long way in strengthening friendship and deepening trade and investment between the two countries;
  - b) Notes that Kenya and the DRC have recently concluded negotiations on the Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) between the two countries, and are at an advanced stage towards concluding on the Memorandum of Understanding to give effect to the BASA. In addition to increasing the frequency and capacity of Kenyan airlines allowed to operate in DRC, the agreement will address the areas of additional route schedules, particularly to Kisangani in the Eastern part of DRC, as well as safety, aviation security, tariffs, and cooperative marketing arrangements between the two states; and
  - c) Urges the Government of the DRC, in the spirit of the friendly and cordial relations between Kenya and the DRC, to consider reviewing favourably the terms of grant of entry visas to Kenyans to have the same issued on entry in the DRC. In the long term, to work towards abolishing, on a reciprocal basis, the requirement for entry visas for nationals of the two countries.

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***On permanent headquarters for the FP-ICGLR***

8. Noting that the Government and Parliament of the DRC have hosted and offered great support to the Secretariat offices of the FP-ICGLR since the year 2012:
- a) Sincerely appreciates both the Parliament and Government of the DRC for availing the rented premises currently housing the Secretariat of the Forum, and for the financial and logistical support that has and continues to be extended to the Forum; and
  - b) Requests both the Parliament and Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consider the possibility of granting permanent premises for the General Secretariat of the Forum in accordance with Article 4 of the Headquarters Agreement between the Government of the DRC and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

***On the political situation and upcoming elections in Burundi***

9. Noting the considerable gains that have been achieved in recent years by the Republic of Burundi, in consolidating peace, stability and democratization in the country, the FP/ICGLR:
- a) Expresses grave concern at the events that have taken place in Burundi since Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015; regrets the loss of lives, and shares the grief of the bereaved families of the victims of those events;
  - b) Calls upon the Burundian authorities to spare no effort to ensure that the provisions of the Arusha Accords and of the 2005 Constitution are respected and implemented in their letter and spirit, including protection of civil liberties, freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly of all Burundians, in order to ensure the attainment of genuine unity, reconciliation, lasting peace and security for all;
  - c) Calls upon the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and all players in the democratic and electoral process in Burundi to guarantee that the elections scheduled for May to August 2015 are carried out in an atmosphere of peace and tolerance, and, ultimately, that the elections are free, transparent, credible and truly express the wishes of the Burundian people;
  - d) Calls upon the various stakeholders and political parties in Burundi to avoid resorting to violence at all circumstances, in accordance with commitments made at national, regional and international levels, and to avoid spreading

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intimidatory and inciteful messages before, during and beyond the electioneering period;

- e) Reiterates the call for tolerance and peace to all citizens of Burundi; and
- f) Calls upon the Media, irrespective of the diverse allegiances that may exist, to perform their work in a responsible manner, without spreading messages that are likely to incite or lead to violence.

***On the recent wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa***

10. Aware of the spate of xenophobic attacks that have taken place in South Africa, most recently in April 2015, the FP ICGLR:

- a) Condemns the attacks against immigrants from other African states in South Africa, and the needless loss of lives resulting from the said attacks;
- b) Urges the Government of South Africa to urgently take measures to protect immigrants in South Africa, to ensure such xenophobic attacks the same do not recur;
- c) Calls upon the Government of South Africa to ensure that immigrants currently resident in South Africa are not subjected to harassment and intimidation, but that the dignity and human rights of the immigrants are upheld.

11. Sincerely thanks the Government, the Parliament and the people of the DRC for the warm welcome and friendly hospitality extended to him and his delegation and for the excellent arrangements made during his visit.

**Done in Kinshasa, on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015.**

**Rt. Hon. Sen. DAVID EKWEE ETHURO, EGH, EBS, MP**

**President of the FP-ICGLR**



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