

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF PARLIAMENTS TO LONG-TERM PEACE IN THE EXTENDED GREAT LAKES REGION

Co-organized by the National Assembly of Kenya, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces

Nairobi, 7-9 December 2009  
Kenyatta International Conference Centre



## BACKGROUND NOTE

### Peace and security in the extended Great Lakes region

Over the past two decades, the Great Lakes region has been plagued by widespread violence, causing immense suffering and devastation. Much of this violence took on a regional dimension.

Today there are increasing signs that the region has set itself on the path to peace, partly thanks to stronger concerted action by African leaders to promote peace and stability, in particular through the African Union and its Peace and Security Council. An African Standby Force should be operational by 2010.

At the subregional level, 11 countries established in 2004 the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) as a forum for resolving armed conflict, maintaining peace and security, and facilitating post-conflict reconstruction. The ICGLR Member States agreed in 2006 a Pact on Stability, Security and Development in a concerted effort to address the root causes of the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

There is also increased regional parliamentary cooperation. Some 700 parliamentarians from the region are united under the banner of the Great Lakes Parliamentary Forum on Peace - Amani Forum, a voluntary, action-based parliamentary initiative created in 1998 to promote sustainable peace. Moreover, there is the East African Legislative Assembly, which includes, except for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all countries of the Great Lakes region.

These regional initiatives, along with national action, are crucial to addressing the many challenges that remain. Indeed, in a number of countries peace remains elusive or fragile at best. Even where the guns have been silenced, much remains to be done to ensure that a security sector is in place which is accountable to non-partisan civilian oversight, in particular through the presence of a robust parliament serving the interests of the people.

### Purposes of the seminar

The seminar will examine major challenges to implementing effectively a security agenda in the Great Lakes region and seeks to identify the contribution that parliaments and their members can make at the national level and, through existing structures, regionally.

The overall aim of the seminar is to provide impetus for increased parliamentary oversight of the security sector at the domestic level, including by drawing inspiration from good parliamentary practices, and to further regional cooperation between parliaments on security issues.

The subjects on the agenda will be presented by parliamentarians and experts in the field of security issues. Interpretation will be provided into and from English and French and all official documents will be made available in both languages. The emphasis will be placed on discussion, and sufficient time will be allotted to a free exchange of opinions.

## **Participants**

The parliaments from all countries that are signatories to the Great Lakes Pact (Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) will be invited to send a delegation to the seminar. The invitations will target members of parliamentary security and defence committees, including parliamentary staff. Delegations should comprise, where possible, members from the ruling party and the opposition and both men and women.

## **Venue and dates**

The seminar is hosted by the National Assembly of Kenya and will take place at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre from 7 to 9 December 2009. In order to facilitate local transport, the organizers have made tentative room reservations at four hotels close to the conference centre. Each member of the delegation is kindly requested to complete the hotel reservation form and return it to the Kenyan Seminar Secretariat by **20 November 2009**.