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STATEMENT ON THE OPERATIONS OF FP-ICGLR AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

It is nearly three months since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the Great Lakes Region on March 10, 2020. Since then the pandemic has spread to all Member-States of the International Conference on Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and by close of May 31, 2020 over 15,176 cases of infections had been recorded with more than 488 deaths and encouragingly over 3898 recoveries.

As we are aware by now, the COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus, is an ongoing pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, and a pandemic on March 11. As May 31, 2020 ended, more than 6,269,364 cases of COVID-19 had been reported in over 215 countries and territories, resulting in more than 373,991 deaths while, positively, more than 2,848,761 people had recovered.

The pandemic has caused severe global socio-economic disruption, including the largest global recession since the Great Depression. It has led to the postponement or cancellation of all sorts of events, widespread supply shortages exacerbated by panic buying at its onset, and positively decreased emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases.

Schools, universities and colleges have closed, either on a nationwide or local basis in over 190 countries, affecting approximately 73.5 per cent of the world's student population. Social distancing, travel and other restrictions have had a great impact on the activities planned worldwide and have affected many aspects of everyday life.

As alluded to at the beginning, the Great Lakes Region has not been spared of these effects. The Forum of Parliaments of the Member-states of the International Conference on Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) would therefore wish to empathise with those who have been affected by the pandemic in any way more so Member-Parliaments, Members of Parliament and the general citizenry in the region as well as our partners both within and outside the region.

At the FP-ICGLR we have also had a share of the effects that caused us to suspend some activities that required travel by participants in April and May as communicated in an earlier statement. Those activities are now being rescheduled and we shall update you on further development in due course. In the meantime, the Forum remains operational but doing much of the work online as we await the lifting of the lockdown at our Headquarters in central Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Last but not least, we encourage Honourable Members of Parliaments, our partners and the entire citizenry in the Great Lakes to continue practicing and abiding by preventive measures constituted against the disease. **Together we shall come out stronger!**

Amb. Onyango Kakoba

Secretary General

Done in Kinshasa, June 1, 2020

About the FP-ICGLR

The FP-ICGLR is an Inter-parliamentary Organization composed of 12 National Parliaments of the ICGLR Member States namely the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of South Sudan, the Republic of the Sudan, the United Republic Tanzania, the Republic of Uganda and the Republic of Zambia.

The main objective of the FP-ICGLR is to make a significant parliamentary contribution to the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

The FP-ICGLR intervenes in the following areas where it has corresponding committees:

- *Democracy and Good Governance;*
- *Peace and Security;*
- *Humanitarian and Social Issues;*
- *Economic Development, Natural Resources and Regional Integration;*
- *Gender, Children and Vulnerable Persons.*