

**H.E.YOWERI KAGUTA MUSEVENI
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
AT THE
4TH EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT AND SPECIAL SESSION
ON THE
SEXUAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

Munyonyo

- 15TH DECEMBER 2011

**Your Excellency Michael Stata, President of the Republic of Zambia, Chairman of
ICGLR**

Your Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

Your Excellency Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya

Your Excellency Pierrie Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi

Your Excellency Vice President of the Republic of Sudan

Your Excellencies Heads of various Delegations

AU Chairperson,

UN Deputy Secretary General

ICGLR Executive Secretary,

Heads of Delegations,

Heads of Diplomatic Corp

Distinguished Delegates

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

You are most welcome to the 4th Extraordinary Summit and Special Session of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We launched the Great Lakes Conference on the 15th of December, 2006. It is, therefore, now 5 years old. This is not, however, the first time a large part of this part of Africa has been linked. The traveller Ibn Battuta wrote as follows:

“After one night in Mombasa, we sailed to Kilwa, a large City on the coast whose inhabitants are black. A merchant told me that a fortnight's sail beyond Kilwa lie Sofala, where gold is brought from a place a month's journey inland called Yufi. The city of Kilwa is among the finest and most substantially built in the world. Its Sultan at the time of visit was Abu'L – Mazaffar Hasan, surnamed Abu Al-Mawahib (the father of Gifts), renowned for his humility, generosity and hospitality. I saw at his court many sharifs, from Iraq and the region of Mecca...the people of Kilwa were engaged in jihad because they are on a common mainland with the heathen zanj (black) people and contiguous to them....”.

This was in the year 1331. Ibn Battuta is telling us that not only was the East African Coast linked, north to South, but that also the Coast was linked with the interior as far inland as the present Zimbabwe, the land of Yufi (which was the source of the gold dust that was traded through Sofala). He also talked of Sofala in Mozambique.

It is also recorded that on November 5th, 1876, H. M. Stanley left Nyangwe on the River Congo to float downwards towards the Atlantic Ocean. Travellers, traders and slave traders were able to move from the Coast of East Africa up to the River Congo. The

same Stanley, on his trip to rescue Emin Pasha between 1886 and 1889, wrote in his book, In Darkest Africa Vol.II (P.366) as follows:

*“By a gradual rise from Amranda Southward we escaped after a few miles out of the unlovely plains to older land producing a better quality of timber. Before we were 100 feet above the lake a visible improvement had taken place the acacia had disappeared, and the **myombo**, a tree whose bark is useful for native cloth and for boxes and which might be adapted for canoes, flourished everywhere. At Bwanga, the next village, the language of the Wahuma, which we had heard continually since leaving the Albert Nyanza, ceases and the Unyamwezi, interpreters had now to be employed, which fact the skeptical Zanzibaris hailed as being evidence that we were approaching **Pwani** (the Coast)”. Of course, what Stanley could not detect is the closeness of the Sukuma – Kinyamwezi dialects with what he called the “Wahuma language” spoken from the Ituri forest in Congo to Mwanza.*

By writing thus, these strangers had long realized the oneness of the peoples of the Great Lakes. Their dialects were part of the same language. Later on, some scholars have described these people as the interlacustrine Bantu – the Bantus of the Lakes. These Bantus of the Lakes have close cultural links with the Nilotic, Sudanic and Cushitic peoples of the Great Lakes. When you hear of one of the languages or dialects of Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, etc. known as Kinyanja. What does it mean? It, apparently, means the language of the Lake – Lake Nyasa in this case. What does the word “Nyasa” mean? It means Lake. What do we call “Lake” in the dialects of East Africa and Eastern Congo? We call it: Nyanza, Nyanja, Nyanzha, depending on the dialects. Indeed, this was very confusing to H. M. Stanley. As a consequence, in his book, In Darkest Africa Vol.II (P.252), he noted as follows:

“...As for the Nyanzas the number became perplexing. There is the Nyanza of Unyoro, the Nyanza of Usongola, the Nyanza of Unyampaka, the Nyanza of Toro, the Nyanza of Semliki, the Nyanza of Unyavingi, the Nyanza of Karagwe and the Nyanza of Uganda...”.

Above all, we have the distillate dialect of Swahili that was distilled from all these Bantu dialects, Arabic, Portuguese, etc., into a hybrid form of speech that is useful in linking the peoples of Africa. I always argue that Swahili should be enriched with the richer dialects from the interior. Only yesterday, I was discussing with some East Africans about the word clay. In Swahili, apparently, clay is called *udongo finyasi*, which sounds like a form of description. While in the dialects of North Western Tanzania, Uganda, etc. the word for clay is *bbumba* like our Minister of Gender or *eibumba (ibumba)*, etc. There is a place called Bumba in DRC, down stream from Kisangani. Does it have anything to do with clay? In Swahili, we talk of *Wimbo wa Taifa*, meaning national anthem. In Acholi (Luo), we talk of *Lubala* – meaning anthem, specifically differentiated from a song which is called *wer*. If Swahili was enriched with the vocabulary of the interior, as the Tanzanians did with the word *Ikulu* meaning State House, we would create the richest human language that has ever existed.

Anyway, the main point is that the concept of the Great Lakes linkage is not new. Long before colonialism, we had clear linkages and understanding of much of the surrounding area – *Bushwahili* (the coast), Karagwe-Buhaya, Rwanda, Buleega (Congo) – hence the name of one of our Kings, Kabaleega, Bukiri (Northern Uganda), etc. Trade was intense. Textiles, guns glass-beads, etc., were coming from the Coast. Ivory (*emiino*) was coming from Buganda, Bunyoro, etc. Copper (*ebikomo, emiringa*) were coming from Congo and so were *amooshe* (arm wear made out of giraffe tail hairs).

When we launched the Great Lakes Conference in 2006, therefore, we were re-activating the old linkages. These linkages in the pre-colonial period were, of course, being inconvenienced by the ignorance of the chiefs who would inconvenience traders by extortionate taxes known as *hongo* during the time when Henry Morton Stanley travelled through the continent in the 1870s. However, the Africans persisted because they needed the linkages. Long Distance *Wanyamweezi* travellers, known as *Balungaanwa* in Uganda, would bring goods from the Coast and take back ivory from Uganda.

During the colonial times, our leaders struggled together through PAFMECSA (Pan-African freedom fighters for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa). The Liberation Movements of this area met in Mwanza, Tanzania (Tanganyika), etc., in the years 1958 and the subsequent ones such as 1962 in Addis Ababa. When the East African countries got freedom in 1961-1964, some of the leaders actively supported the anti-colonial struggle in Southern Africa (Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and South Africa). When the Independence of Congo (DRC) was disrupted by the schemes of the Imperialists, the East African countries plus Congo Brazzaville took a correct stand of resisting these schemes. Eventually, Africa assisted the people of DRC to get rid of the puppet regime of Mobutu. The genocide in Rwanda was stopped by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) assisted by the people of East Africa. The peace in the Sudan was the work of the people of Sudan themselves and the people of the Region. It is the Region that helped us to get rid of Idi Amin in 1979. In particular, we must salute the following leaders who contributed to the total liberation of Africa: the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, the late General Samora Machel, Apostinho Neto, Eduardo Dos Santos, H.E. Robert Mugabe, the late Dr. John Garang, H.E. General Salva Kiir, the late Fred Rwigyema, H.E. President Paul Kagame, the late Laurent Kabila, H.E.

Mzee Nelson Mandela, the late Oliver Tambo, etc.

Apart from political liberation, there are now three clear efforts in this Region: democratization, free market policies and integration. These three are good value addition to our independence. If they are consolidated, we are poised to soar to great heights. While the world has been in economic turmoil, the Region has been experiencing growth rates of between 4.4% and 5.9%¹. This is inevitable because these economies have, for the last 500 years, been operating far below their potential.

If we could focus on infrastructure development, *the sky would be the limit*. The late Mwalimu Nyerere and Mzee Kaunda, assisted by the Chinese, linked Dar-es-Salaam to Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia. We, the present generation of leaders, should link Tanga with Port Bell, Kasese with Kisangani, Gulu with Juba by rail, Kasese with Gisenyi, etc. Lake Tanganyika, Lake Victoria, Lake Edward (*Butumbi Rutshuru*), Lake Albert (*Mwitanzigye*) should be made into highways of water transport. Above all, we must electrify this Region according to each country's plan or according to the Regional master plan. The present levels of kilowatt hour (kWh) per capita are too low in this part of the world. This is not acceptable. In Uganda, we have also found Universal Education quite useful. As we speak today, almost one third of the population of Uganda's 33 million people are in schools – Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and University. Our struggle is now to give them skills on top of numeracy and alphabetization.

One of the main purposes of the Great Lakes Conference was security in the Region. The key to this is inter-state co-operation. If the African countries co-operate, assisted by the international community, there is no security problem that can defeat us. We defeated the

¹ Source: EAC Secretariat.

Lord Resistance Army (LRA) through co-operating with the brothers and sisters of South Sudan, DRC and Central African Republic.

Agali awamu gegaluma enyama – meaning (the teeth that are a whole are the ones that can successfully chew meat); in other words, unity is strength. I am sorry about the inadequacy of the English language. It does not have comparably rich vocabulary in comparison to the African dialects some of these meanings. Notice the too many English words I must use to vainly try to convey the same meaning captured in the Luganda proverb where I use only four words. I use fourteen words to vainly attempt to translate a proverb where we use only four words.

That now brings me to the subject this Conference is called upon to address. The subject of “**Sexual and Gender-based Violence**”, but the Theme is: “**United to Prevent Sexual and Gender-based Violence, End Impunity and Provide Support to the Victims.**”

Addressing this subject from a historical perspective, I think that, it is a shameful subject considering that many of our African cultures did not take kindly to harsh treatment of women. Women in my culture were pampered and spoiled because a family that treated women badly was penalized by being denied the right to marry from respectable families. Therefore, there is no good reason in present day Africa why sexual violence should be tolerated especially as we struggle to stabilize our nations. Therefore, the only thing I can say here is that indeed there should be “zero tolerance” on this practice and to allow impunity in this era is indeed indiscipline of the highest order.

I am informed that in Uganda, Gender-based Violence is reportedly on the increase. I note many times that our media show that mostly women are often the victims of

domestic and sexual violence. This has resulted in some women dying and many have suffered from sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

The Uganda Police Crime Report for 2008 shows that 1,536 cases of rape were reported to Police compared to 511 cases in 2007, indicating more than 100% increase!

Some studies have suggested that there is a strong link between the risk of domestic violence and alcohol consumption which I have learned has been steadily rising higher.

Women have made public complaints to me, petitioning me to reinstate the Graduated tax which the NRM Government abolished. They are convinced that perhaps men may not have to drink the whole day if they had reason to work. Apparently, without the obligation to pay graduated tax, men are no longer pushed to work and, therefore, 'drink themselves to the grave'.

This is a pathetic situation and indeed as I said already it is a real shame to the generation of the African men today who behave like this. If we have never felt ashamed in the past because of the famines that kill our children, or the HIV/AIDS scourge that wiped off whole communities because of irresponsible lifestyles, I think, time has come for Africans to really reconsider their lifestyles so that we change for the better.

I thank you very much and I welcome you to Uganda, your home.

15th December 2011 - *Munyonyo*