



## Press Release

The Executive Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) is deeply concerned by the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which constitutes an unprecedented international health crisis affecting large part of the world; in fact the Coronavirus is a global threat that spares no country, region or continent.

The Conference Secretariat (CS) is closely monitoring the development of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world and in the Great Lakes Region (GLR) in particular, and is gravely concerned by the unsustainable and potentially uncoordinated global and regional responses to combat the COVID 19 pandemic. The Conference Secretariat emphasizes the need for coordinated global and regional plans and approaches to respond to the health and economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Conference Secretariat expresses its deep solidarity with the peoples of the ICGLR Member States in these difficult times for the region and the world. The CS takes this opportunity to extend its encouragement to families and communities in GLR affected by the pandemic, and expresses sincere condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. The CS also appreciates the extraordinary sacrifices made by health care delivery workers across the world and in the Great Lakes Region in particular to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Conference Secretariat commends the extraordinary efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) in coordinating global and regional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic including support to the national health systems in ICGLR Member States. The CS also appreciates the support from the international community towards preventing the spread of the Coronavirus in the Great Lakes Region and whole Africa, and at the same time strengthening health systems in both the GLR and the African continent.

In fact the Great Lakes Region has accumulated experience in fighting epidemics such as Ebola; the Conference Secretariat encourages regional initiatives such as meetings of Ministers of health in GLR to take regional measures and decisions to contain the progress of COVID 19. The CS also encourages more cooperation and collective work among ICGLR Member States to address the current pandemic of Coronavirus and the huge humanitarian, social and economic problems it may trigger. The Coronavirus is a multidimensional risk, it affects both societies and economies, and it strikes the most vulnerable persons and communities.

The CS calls on ICGLR Member States to join forces to address the multidimensional threat of Coronavirus and to guarantee access to humanitarian and emergency aid. In addition the CS calls on ICGLR Member States to consider establishing a Humanitarian, Social and Environmental Agency for the Great Lakes Region, which can involve all of economic operators, donors, civil society, religious platforms, and International Organizations to address the negative impacts caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. In fact it is of utmost importance for all ICGLR Member States and all stakeholders, in GLR to come

together in a spirit of solidarity to overcome this global threat so as to save lives.

Finally the ICGLR Conference Secretariat wishes that through concerted regional and international cooperation the international community will be able to overcome this global challenge and save lives.

Bujumbura, 3rd of April 2020,