



**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION
HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR JOÃO SAMUEL CAHOLO,**

**PRESENTED TO THE
147TH ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION**

**DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE
ON THE THEME: *PARLIAMENTARY ACTION FOR PEACE,
JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS (SDG 16)***

24th October 2023

LUANDA, REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA

Honourable Duarte Pacheco, President of the Interparliamentary Union;

Honourable Carolina Cerqueira, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Angola;

Honourable Martin Chungong,, Secretary General of the Interparliamentary Union;

Honourable Members of Parliaments;

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a great privilege to address the esteemed members of the 147th Parliamentary Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union. Allow me to express my heartfelt gratitude to Honourable Carolina Cerqueira, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Angola, for giving me this incredible opportunity.
2. As the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), I have witnessed first-hand both the boundless potential and the immense challenges facing our region. Our primary mission is to promote peace, security, stability, and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa. In line with this mission, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which focuses on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions, is highly relevant and aligned with our goals.
3. Unfortunately, the Great Lakes Region continues to grapple with conflicts, violence, poverty, arms trafficking, corruption, and a lack

of access to justice. However, SDG 16 provides a comprehensive framework to address these issues. This Sustainable Development Goal aims to reduce violence, ensure fairness for all individuals, combat illicit activities, strengthen institutions, and enhance transparency and accountability.

4. The ambitious targets enshrined in SDG 16 directly address the Great Lakes region's most pressing challenges. These targets perfectly align with the admirable objectives of the ICGLR Pact, signed by Heads of State and Governments of the 12 Member States, to improve governance, security, justice, and development cooperation. By steadfastly implementing SDG 16, we have the power to advance the stability, reconciliation, and prosperity of the people who call this region home.

Honourable Members,

5. As representatives chosen by the people, esteemed parliamentarians have a significant duty to achieve these crucial goals. Peace, justice, and robust institutions are essential for the sustainable development of any country. Without them, societies crumble and fall apart, human rights suffer abuse, and progress becomes an unattainable vision. Therefore, we must acknowledge wholeheartedly and prioritize the fundamental role of parliamentary action in ensuring the realization of these objectives.
6. Parliaments are commanding in shaping legal frameworks, overseeing governments, and voicing the people's aspirations. You

possess the authority to craft, modify, and enforce laws that foster peace, justice, and strong institutions. In this crucial undertaking, the ICGLR Heads of State and Government established the Forum of Parliaments of the ICGLR, which plays an indispensable role. It provides a platform for parliamentarians to share best practices, pool their experiences, and collaborate on issues central to peace, justice, and strong institutions. The Forum fosters collaboration, enabling esteemed parliamentarians like yourselves to collectively tackle common challenges and devise effective strategies for positive change.

7. In the Great Lakes region, the pursuit of peace remains the guiding force behind the ICGLR. As authors of national policies and legislation, parliamentarians wield the power to engineer frameworks that foster tranquillity, prevent conflicts, and facilitate open dialogue. By addressing the root causes of conflict, you can significantly advance the resolution of internal and external conflicts, thereby securing stability and prosperity for our citizens.
8. I encourage you to maximize the impact of your legislative authority in promoting peacebuilding and resolving conflicts. Strengthen democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law, and establish effective mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution. Ensure inclusivity in political dialogue by considering the perspectives of women, youth, minorities, and marginalized groups. Develop policies that address underlying tensions related to land, resources, ethnicity, and other contentious issues. Allocate sufficient funds

towards mediation efforts and peace processes. Your capable hands hold the power to foster peace within society.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Justice and the rule of law are foundations for prosperous and stable societies. Parliamentarians must prioritize justice and the rule of law to foster prosperous and stable societies. They should strive to create equitable laws that are uniformly applied, regardless of an individual's socioeconomic status. Efforts should be focused on strengthening judicial systems, improving law enforcement capabilities, and combating corruption. By taking these measures, individuals will have access to justice, offenders will be held accountable, and public trust in the legal system can be restored.
10. I urge you to exercise your constitutional powers to uphold justice and the rule of law. Pass laws that reinforce judicial independence, protect human rights, increase legal access and transparency, and curb corruption.
11. Lastly, robust institutions act as the anchor that bolsters prosperous and stable societies. Parliamentarians must ensure that government institutions function efficiently and transparently, free from corruption or undue influence. Strong institutions elevate the delivery of public services and create an attractive climate for investment, thereby catalyzing economic growth.

12. Effective institutions do not arise spontaneously. As parliamentarians, you must lead the charge in constructing institutional frameworks marked by accountability, transparency, and resiliency. Institute rigorous oversight procedures to deter misconduct. Approve budgets that enable institutions to carry out their mandated duties effectively. Promote meritocracy in public sector appointments. Together with civil society, mobilize public engagement in institutional reforms. We rely on you to spearhead the transformation of institutions into pillars of good governance and national development.

13. In conclusion, parliamentary action constitutes a formidable force for advancing peace, justice, and strong institutions. Through legislation, oversight, and an unwavering commitment to democratic ideals, parliamentarians can ignite positive change within societies. Let us redouble our efforts to bolster parliamentary initiatives that promote peace, justice, and strong institutions, for they are the foundation upon which we can collectively erect a more prosperous and sustainable future.

14. Once again, I express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to speak before you today. May our shared commitment to achieving the goal of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development bring hope and opportunity to all people.

I thank you.