

**Address by the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union
Commission, H.E. Selma Malika Haddadi**

**Ad Hoc Summit of Heads of State and Government
Hosted by H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of the
Republic of Uganda, Chair of the Regional Oversight
Mechanism (ROM) of the Peace, Security and Cooperation
Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the
Region**

21 December 2025

- **Your Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism,**
- **Your Excellency President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic Congo, Chair of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region,**
- **Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,**
- **Your Excellencies the Ministers**
- **Distinguished Delegates,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me begin by warmly thanking His Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for convening and hosting this Ad Hoc Summit at such a critical moment for the Great Lakes Region.

I also wish to acknowledge His Excellency President Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo, in his capacity as President in Office of the ICGLR, for his continued commitment to regional peace and stability.

I would also like to congratulate the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, Dr Mubita Luwabelwa and wish him every success in the fulfilment of his mandate.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I convey to you the warm greetings of His Excellency Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and his regrets for being unable to be with us today.

He has therefore asked me to represent him and to reaffirm the full support of the African Union Commission for this Summit and for the objectives that bring us together.

Allow me to convey his key messages as follows:

The African Union is deeply concerned by the continued deterioration of the situation in the Great Lakes Region.

In particular, the seizure of Uvira by the AFC/M23 is a serious development, which we firmly condemn, as it runs counter to the commitments undertaken under the Washington Agreement and the Doha Framework.

Let us be very clear: The sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, and especially of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are not negotiable.

At the same time, the African Union remains convinced that lasting peace cannot be achieved by military means alone.

Only political solutions, rooted in dialogue and consultation, can address the deep-seated causes of recurring conflict in this region.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the current context, this Summit must help us respond to three essential questions.

First, how do we stop the military escalation and establish a credible ceasefire that creates the conditions for genuine dialogue ?

On this point, the African Union supports all initiatives emerging from the region that aim to silence the guns.

A ceasefire is indispensable — and, where necessary, it must be effectively enforced — so that the parties can move decisively from confrontation to conversation.

Second, how do we prevent a wider regional escalation, the consequences of which would be severe and unpredictable ?

This requires the urgent relaunch of a structured regional dialogue among the key countries of the Great Lakes Region — a dialogue that addresses not only the root causes, but also the immediate drivers of tension.

We know that this region is bound together by economic complementarities, cross-border exchanges and deep community ties. These realities already provide a basis for peaceful coexistence.

What is now needed is to translate them into political and security cooperation, through a methodical dialogue at technical, strategic and political levels.

Such a process should help revitalise the regional security architecture, give renewed relevance to existing instruments including the Pact on Mutual Defence and Non-Aggression and promote a coordinated regional approach to negative forces.

In this effort, the African Union stands fully ready to accompany and support the region.

Third, allow me to raise one fundamental question: how do we turn economic interdependence in the Great Lakes region into a force for good neighbourliness, peace, and lasting stability?

In this regard, the African Union Commission welcomes the Regional Integration Economic Framework signed between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda under the Peace Agreement.

This framework is fully consistent with the spirit of Agenda 2063, in particular its two flagship initiatives: *Silencing the Guns* and the *African Continental Free Trade Area*.

We strongly encourage the signatory parties to move decisively toward the effective implementation of this framework.

At the same time, we emphasise the importance of inclusivity. Uganda and Burundi are explicitly referenced in this framework, and their meaningful participation will be essential to ensuring its credibility, sustainability, and regional ownership.

The African Union Commission stands ready to use its convening power to promote coherence and complementarity between this framework and other economic mechanisms in the Great Lakes region including the ICGLR.

Our objective is clear: to ensure that shared economic development becomes a driver of trust, a foundation for peace, and a pathway to long-term stability.

Finally, the African Union would like to underscore the critical importance of Women, Peace and Security in our collective response to the conflict in the Great Lakes region. Women continue to bear the brunt of conflict, particularly in eastern DRC, where they are disproportionately affected by violence, displacement, and economic disruption. At the same time, women are also key drivers of resilience and regional integration, notably through informal cross-border trade, which sustains livelihoods and preserves social ties even in times of acute instability.

In this regard, the Summit should explicitly address the persistent and unacceptable levels of violence against women in eastern DRC, and reaffirm the imperative of accountability and protection. I wish to

acknowledge the valuable contribution and continued engagement of Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, in ensuring that these issues remain central to our deliberations.

The future of the Great Lakes region cannot be conceived without women. It must recognize women not only as victims of conflict, but as stakeholders, agents of peace, and essential partners in regional integration and reconciliation.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the African Union, I wish to reaffirm our full commitment to working closely with the ICGLR, which remains a central platform linking the different regional spaces of the Great Lakes.

While decisions may be taken in due course on the establishment of additional regional mechanisms, the African Union Commission remains steadfastly committed to supporting the ICGLR in its vital mission: to promote stability, peaceful coexistence and shared development across the region.

In conclusion, the challenges before us are serious, but they are not insurmountable.

With collective leadership, regional ownership and sustained political engagement, the Great Lakes Region can move away from cycles of violence and toward lasting peace.

I thank you for your attention.