

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION – AN AFRICAN CSCE?¹

Charlotte Heyl

A glimpse at the political situation in the Great Lakes Region of Africa shows no sign of stabilization any time soon. In the run up to the presidential elections in Burundi, there were multiple grenade attacks in Bujumbura, and the elections were boycotted by the opposition. The political climate worsened in months prior to the presidential elections in Rwanda: opposition politicians were arrested, newspapers critical of the regime were banned, and former allies of Rwandan President Paul Kagame fled. Meanwhile, Kinshasa celebrated 50 years of independence for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which should not hide the fact that the country's presidential elections slated for November 2011 will face similar challenges to those of their neighbors to the east. The country continues to be the scene of violent conflicts. Just one indicator of this is the fact that the United Nations calculated that 20,000 displaced Congolese were in the North Kivu province within one week in July. These displaced people had fled from fighting between the Congolese Army and the Ugandan rebels known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

The region's history has shown that internal conflicts can easily have a destabilizing effect on neighboring countries. If we consider the genocide in Rwanda, for instance, it is



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1 | The following report is based on parts of "Das Instrument der regionalen Friedenskonferenzen am Beispiel der Internationalen Konferenz Große Seen," (master's thesis submitted to Prof. Dr. Peter Molt, University of Trier, August 25, 2009). The thesis uses telephone interviews and e-mail surveys with employees at ICGLR and related entities as well as unpublished ICGLR work documents. Prof. Dr. Peter Molt deserves special thanks for having carefully reviewed this document.

clear how the attempted coup in Burundi and the connected assassination of democratically elected President Melchior Ndadaye in 1993 impacted Rwanda and how, in turn, the consequences of this genocide marked Zaire at that time, and how they have marked present-day DR Congo.

There is now an institution in the region that has taken up the cause of achieving lasting peace: The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), an institutionalized conference initiated by the international community. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is often cited as being a prototype of the ICGLR.²

The idea of a regional conference solution based on the example of the CSCE was first proposed at the UN Security Council in October 1994. This initiative can be viewed in the context of three developments. First, after the genocide in Rwanda, which UN troops simply stood by and watched due to their limited mandate, the international community needed to make ethical amends with Rwanda. Second, the genocide had highlighted regional dynamics in the Great Lakes Region. Searching for a regional solution was almost the obvious answer.

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Third, immediately after the end of the Cold War, the CSCE was perceived as a success story in many ways and as serving as an example for other regions of the world. In the early 1990s, numerous designs were made for conferences similar to CSCE. For example, the then Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs suggested a "North Pacific Security Cooperation Conference." At the CSCE expert meeting on the Mediterranean, an outline was drafted for a "Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean." The African Leadership Forum discussed a "Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa," and Willy Brandt along with Crown Prince of Jordan El Hassan bin Talal proposed a "Conference on Security

2 | Gilbert Khadiagala, "Building Security for Peoples, Societies, and States," in: Gilbert Khadiagala (ed.), *Security Dynamics in Africa's Great Lakes Region* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 187-197; Gerald Duda, "Regionale Stabilisierungsansätze: Die Internationale Konferenz Große Seen," in: BMZ (ed.), *Fragile Staaten. Beispiele aus der entwicklungspolitischen Praxis*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007), 243-265.

and Cooperation in the Middle East" (CSCME) for the period following the Gulf War.³

The question now is how plausible it is for the CSCE model to be applied to other regions of the world. Upon closer inspection, the CSCE process hardly seems to be a compelling success story. The true impact of the CSCE is hardly tangible and cannot be considered as the deciding factor in the end of the East/West conflict.⁴ The conference process was also marked by numerous dry spells and setbacks. It is therefore surprising that the CSCE model was proliferated with such jubilation in the 1990s and that such little consideration was apparently given to whether the model could even be implemented in other historical and geographical contexts. A methodical analysis of the CSCE model's ability to be applied in the Middle East produces skeptical findings as to the prospects for success using such a conference model in this region.⁵

CAN THE CSCE MODEL BE APPLIED TO AFRICA?

The following section will present the starting conditions for the ICGLR as divided into the categories of conflict structure, historical context, actors and common interests.

CONFLICT STRUCTURE

The CSCE existed in an international system with a bipolar structure. Within this system, the United States and the Soviet Union acted as superpowers. Each state led a political, military and economic bloc that dependent allies joined. This conflict of systems overshadowed other conflicts in Europe, which is why the Europe of the 1970s can be considered a uniform conflict region. Individual states faced each other as actors in the conflict.

- 3 | Norbert Ropers and Peter Schlotter, *Die KSZE: Multilaterales Konfliktmanagement im weltpolitischen Umbruch* (Bonn: Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 1992), 32.
- 4 | Schlotter gives a detailed analysis of the impact of the CSCE: Peter Schlotter, *Die KSZE im Ost-West-Konflikt: Wirkung einer internationalen Institution* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verlag, 1999).
- 5 | Frank Schimmelfennig, *Konferenzdiplomatie als regionale Friedensstrategie: Lässt sich das KSZE-Modell auf den Vorderen Orient übertragen?* (Hamburg: Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik Hamburg, 1991).

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In contrast, the region of the ICGLR member states⁶ does not represent a uniform conflict region. Rather, the region is home to a variety of conflicts. Armed conflict took place in eight of the eleven ICGLR countries in the years prior to the conference.⁷ These were internal conflicts that nevertheless had spill-over effects such as flows of refugees and arms trade, which in turn contributed to destabilization in neighboring countries. Countries in the region have only marginal control of their borders, meaning that opposition rebel groups can retreat to neighboring territories. There are different actors taking part in each of the various conflicts. There is no conflict in the region in which every ICGLR country is involved.

A mere glimpse at the conflict region of the Kivu provinces in eastern DR Congo reveals the complexity of the region's conflicts. It is generally understood that there are three interconnected levels of conflict in the Kivu provinces: regional, national and local.⁸

At the local level, there is a conflict between the indigenous and the non-indigenous people of Rwandan descent. This conflict is mainly over access to land and local positions of power and began to escalate in the 1960s during the Kanyarwanda War in Masisi.⁹

The regional level of the conflict was sparked by the flows of refugees resulting from the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The refugees included a large number of people who had belonged to Juvénal Habyarimana's Rwandan army and

6 | The ICGLR member states are Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, DR Congo, Kenya, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Zambia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

7 | These countries are Angola, Burundi, DR Congo, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, and Uganda.

8 | International Crisis Group, "The Kivus: The Forgotten Crucible of the Congo Conflict," September 10, 2010, in: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/central-africa/dr-congo/The%20Kivus%20The%20Forgotten%20Crucible%20of%20the%20Congo%20Conflict.ashx> (accessed October 10, 2010).

9 | René Lemarchand, "The Geopolitics of the Great Lakes Crisis," in: Filip Reyntjens, Stefaan Marysse (eds.), *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: Dix Ans des Transitions Conflictuelles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 25-54.

the paramilitary group Interahamwe, both of which took active part in the genocide. The threat of these actors gave the new Rwandan Government legitimacy to directly and indirectly intervene in the DR Congo in the following years. At the same time, these interventions concealed Rwanda's imperialist intentions, particularly with regard to incidents involving natural resources in DR Congo.¹⁰ The interventions initially led to the fall of Mobutu in 1997. As the conflict progressed, other countries intervened, such as Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

The national level of the conflict revolves around power in Kinshasa and control of DR Congo. The conflict is marked by ever-changing alliances and a splintering of rebel groups, which are partially supported by neighbor countries. Despite the Pretoria Accord and the official end of the transition period with the 2006 elections, these conflicts cannot yet be considered over. Among other things, this is clear given the problems posed by rebel group *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP) in 2007 and 2008 as well as the rebel attack on the airport in Mbandaka, Équateur Province in April 2010, which was only quelled with help from the UN Mission in DR Congo, MONUC.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The idea of a European security conference was developed on the soviet side. Thus, one of the two main actors in the conflict of systems initiated the process. After initial skepticism from the west, the signing of the Treaty of Moscow and the Treaty of Warsaw meant that both sides had fulfilled the requirements to begin a European security conference, all this within the context of the policy of détente.¹¹ After an initial stage of euphoria in Helsinki, a stage of stagnation began at the following CSCE conferences in Belgrade and Vienna. It was not until after Mikhail Gorbachev took office in 1985 and introduced his reform policy that substantial progress was made in negotiations at the follow-up conference in Vienna.

10 | Gérard Prunier, *From genocide to continental war: the 'Congolese' conflict and the crisis of contemporary Africa* (London: Hurst, 2009), 333; Filip Reyntjens, *The great African war: Congo and geopolitics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 280.

11 | Peter Schlotter, 1999, n. 4, 110.

However, it was not any one of the conflict partners who proposed the idea of an international conference for the Great Lakes Region, but rather the UN Security Council in 1994 and again in April of 1997.¹² The conference was meant to be initiated from within the UN and the OAU. In December of 1999, Berhanu Dinka, the UN General Secretary's Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, received the mandate to meet with the heads of state in the region to discuss the idea of a conference. He carried out these deliberations along with a special envoy from the OAU.¹³

The idea of an international conference was met with resistance in the region. It was regarded as a western strategy to weaken regional initiatives, and Uganda and Rwanda in particular argued that such a conference project would only make sense once the security problem in eastern DR Congo was resolved. It was believed that starting prior to this would distract from the main problems in the region.¹⁴

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Yet the idea continued to circulate. UN Security Council Resolutions 1291 and 1304 in 2000 once again called for the adoption of such a regional conference project. During the UN Security Council's visit to the Great

Lakes Region in April and May of 2002, the convoy brought an outline for the organization of the conference project to use as a basis for discussion.¹⁵

- 12 | UN-Security Council, "Statement by the President of the Security Council: S/PRST/1997/22," in: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N97/110/21/PDF/N9711021.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed October 9, 2010).
- 13 | UN-Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on preparations for an international conference on the Great Lakes region: S/2003/1099," in: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/613/70/PDF/N0361370.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed October 9, 2010).
- 14 | Francois Grignon, "Economic Agendas in the Congolese Peace Process," in: Michael Nest (ed.), *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Economic Dimensions of War and Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 63-98 (89 et seq.); Howard Wolpe, "The Great Lakes Crisis: An American View," in: *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 1 (2000), 27-42 (40).
- 15 | UN-Security Council, "Report of the Security Council Mission to the GLR 27.4.-7.5.2002, Addendum, S/2002/537/Add.1," in: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/381/45/IMG/N0238145.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed October 10, 2010).

The official process of preparing for the ICGLR began in June of 2003, a few months after the signing of DR Congo's Sun City Agreement. The organization of an "International Conference on Peace, Security and Development in the Great Lakes Region and Central Africa" is anchored to the addendum to the Sun City final act.¹⁶ The signing of the agreement followed peace agreements with Rwanda and Uganda in 2002, who thereby committed to withdrawing their troops from DR Congo. In exchange, the Congolese Government promised to disarm the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), a rebel group comprised of former soldiers from the Habyarimana Army and the Interahamwe.

The presence of foreign troops in DR Congo as well as operations by the FDLR on Congolese land were underlying points of contention that had made cooperation between these neighbor countries impossible up until then. The resolution of these points can essentially be compared to the Treaty of Moscow and the Treaty of Warsaw as requirements for the CSCE despite the fact that at the time, there was doubt as to whether all Rwandan armed forces would actually be withdrawn and whether Kinshasa was willing to demobilize the FDLR.¹⁷

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There was much interplay between the progress of the ICGLR process and developments in DR Congo. Two ICGLR summits relating to DR Congo were postponed. The second was planned for the signing of the Nairobi Pact, and by request from Congolese transitional government, it was postponed one month before it was scheduled to be held (December 2005). The reason cited by the Congolese transitional government for this request was that the summit would then coincide with the national constitutional referendum and that it would be preferable to have a democratically legitimate government sign the pact. It

16 | ReliefWeb, "The Final Act, Sun City 2.4.2003," August 6, 2010, in: [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2005.nsf/FilesByRWDocUNIDFileName/MHII-6B964R-ic-drc-2apr.pdf/\\$File/ic-drc-2apr.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2005.nsf/FilesByRWDocUNIDFileName/MHII-6B964R-ic-drc-2apr.pdf/$File/ic-drc-2apr.pdf) (accessed October 10, 2010).

17 | International Crisis Group, 2010, n. 8

is likely that Kabila wanted to make his signing dependent upon support from neighbor countries for the transitional process in DR Congo.¹⁸

The third ICGLR summit had been planned for December 2008 in Kinshasa, but this summit was also postponed. The cause for delay was the escalation of fighting between rebels from the CNDP and the Congolese Army in North Kivu and the resulting strained relations between DR Congo and Rwanda.

ACTORS

As for the CSCE, the groups of actors were clearly structured, and the actors involved in both the conflict and the conference proceedings also took part. The 35 CSCE member states can be divided up along the lines of the conflict of systems into three groups: the Eastern bloc, the Western bloc and the group made up of neutral and non-aligned states. The division of the conference actors into two or three groups and the parallel between the conflicts meant a simplification of negotiation topics and positions. In contrast, the actors in the ICGLR are less clearly structured, and influential actors can also be found outside the area of the ICGLR countries.

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Initially, there was some early disagreement during the preparation process over what countries should be counted as key members of the ICGLR. At the first preparation meeting in June 2003, the key member countries that participated were Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. These countries reflect the generally accepted Great Lakes Region.¹⁹ This consists solely of

18 | Pamphile Sebahara, "La Conférence internationale sur l'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Enjeux et impact sur la paix et le développement en RDC," Group for Research and Information on Peace Security, in: http://www.grip.org/pub/rapports/rg06-2_paix%20grands%20lacs.pdf (accessed October 10, 2010).

19 | This limits the Great Lakes Region to the lakes of Tanganyika, Victoria, Albert, Eduard and Kivu. The region thus includes Burundi, Rwanda, a large part of Uganda, the northwestern part of Tanzania and a section of the northwestern part of DR Congo. Jean-Pierre Chrétien, "Die Großen Seen in Ostafrika," in: Stefanie Weis and Joscha Schmierer (eds.), *Prekäre Staatlichkeit und internationale Ordnung* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 261-278.

DR Congo's neighbors to the east, which might mean that a focus was intentionally placed on the conflict in eastern DR Congo. However, as the preparation process progressed, several countries expressed their interest in more actively participating in the process. DR Congo proposed including all its neighbor states, in particular Angola, the Republic of the DR Congo and the Central African Republic. The other key countries were reserved in their response to the proposal to expand the circle of members. In particular, Rwanda and Uganda were against the proposal.

The reason behind including all DR Congo's neighbor states is the regional dimension of the conflicts. For example, Ugandan rebel group *Lord's Resistance Army* (LRA) threatened territory in the Central African Republic, Rwandan refugees fled to the Republic of the Congo and Angola was a pivotal actor in the Congo wars. As such, an expanded regional response to these problems seemed sensible, since having all DR Congo's neighbor countries participate in the ICGLR was in line with the mission of protecting DR Congo's integrity. The Inter-Congolese Dialogue was aimed at restoring unity in DR Congo, which had been split into three segments by the civil war. Limiting activity to DR Congo's neighbors to the east could have augmented this disintegrative dynamic. After extensive diplomatic efforts by the African Union and the UN, all the candidate countries were accepted, and 11 countries are now members of the ICGLR.

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In contrast to the distinct bloc structure of the CSCE negotiations, alliances among the ICGLR states were less clear. Part of the dynamics of the Congo wars involves alliances that frequently form and change, often based on the premise that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend.' Friends and foes can quickly trade places. The result is that some actors who now have strained relations once got along well. This is true of Kagame, who once served in the Museveni's army, for instance. Joseph Kabila once fought in the AFDL alongside Rwandan commanders.²⁰

20 | Peter Molt, "Der schwierige Frieden in der Region der Großen Seen Afrikas," in: *KAS-Auslandsinformationen* (2009) 2, 27-50.

From the onset, the ICGLR process was impossible to imagine without the efforts of external actors. The inception of the process itself traces back to external actors. The UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Ibrahim Fall, as well as the AU Special Envoys to the Great Lakes Region, Keli Walubita and Mamadou Bah provided diplomatic and organizational preparation. Financial support was needed from donor countries, and to this end, the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region was established in 2003.

Just as with the CSCE, countries are the key actors in the ICGLR process. These are countries that have serious difficulty carrying out their governmental tasks in certain areas.

The Failed State Index classifies four ICGLR members as failed states and seven as countries in danger of becoming failed states.²¹ This means the process has participation from governments that do not have enough control of their states to ensure that the decisions they make will be implemented.

Non-state violent actors are also significant actors in the conflicts of the Great Lake Region. They are not directly involved in the ICGLR process. Thus, the conference actors do not reflect all the conflict actors in the region.

Non-state violent actors are also significant actors in the conflicts of the Great Lake Region. They are not allowed to be directly involved in the ICGLR process, which is wise given the risk posed by negotiating with non-state violent actors.²² Thus, the conference actors do not reflect all the conflict actors in the region. This demonstrates the additional challenges facing the ICGLR states as compared to the state actors in both the conflict behind the CSCE and the conference itself.

21 | The Central African Republic, DR Congo, Kenya and Sudan are classified as failed states: Fund for Peace, *The Failed State Index 2010*, in: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings (accessed August 6, 2010).

22 | Dealing with non-state violent actors in peace processes is problematic. The practice of making allowances for non-state actors in negotiations after acts of war leads to a dynamic which makes violence appear to be an effective means to achieving one's own interests. An in-depth discussion of this effect can be found in: Andreas Mehler and Denis M. Tull, "The hidden costs of power sharing: Reproducing insurgent violence in Africa," in: *African Affairs*, 104 (2005) 416, 375-398.

COMMON INTEREST AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR COOPERATION

In the theoretical discussion of the desirability of cooperation among states and its effects on international relations as a whole, the existence of common interest is regarded as a decisive driving force for cooperation.²³ The prevention of mutual nuclear destruction is generally accepted as a common interest for the two blocs within the framework of the East-West conflict.

When it comes to the ICGLR, the question of what common interest exists is far more difficult to answer. It may be assumed that there is a common interest among the populace to stabilize the region, yet at the same time, there is much uncertainty as to the priority that is given to public interests by those in power in the region. At the same time, autocratic rulers have an interest in a certain amount of territorial stability, since permeable borders enable rebel groups opposing the regime to operate with more ease as was the case with the Ugandan LRA and the Rwandan FDLR, for instance.

One common interest among the ICGLR states can be assumed: the countries had been promised access to additional development funds by the ICGLR.

However, *one* common interest among the ICGLR states can be assumed: the countries had been promised access to additional development funds by the ICGLR. That is also why so many countries suddenly wanted to join the ICGLR. The idea of a Marshall Fund for the Great Lakes Region prompted the countries to reach a consensus in the negotiation of the Nairobi Pact. Judging by the lack of financial commitments for the ICGLR special fund for reconstruction and development, there is a risk that participating countries may no longer see any additional value in the ICGLR.

Thus, the ICGLR is surrounded by an entirely different historical and conflict structure environment than that of the CSCE. The contrasts in the areas of conflict structure and actors are particularly stark. The conflicts in the region of the ICGLR are considerably more fragmented

23 | Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

and encompass a broader spectrum of actors, including non-state violent actors in particular. Focusing on countries as key actors was a prudent decision in the context of the CSCE. In the Great Lakes Region, this instrument is reaching its limits, since the local countries have less capacity for implementation. In order to carry out larger projects, there is also a dependence on external actors from the donor community.

THE ICGLR – A DYING PAPER TIGER?

After the signing of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration in November of 2004, the Nairobi Pact was negotiated at various levels. At the national level, national coordinators were appointed to set up national preparation committees. Representatives from the national coordination committees met in regional preparation committees. At the ministerial level, the regional interministerial committee met twice after the Dar-es-Salaam summit. In parallel to preparations for the Nairobi Pact, there was also participation from experts as well as organizations for civil society, religious groups, women and young people.

The Nairobi Pact²⁴ of December 2006 includes the pact itself and ten protocols under international law including a mutual non-aggressive pact as well as programs of action. The programs of action for peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration as well as humanitarian and social

A provision was made to create a special fund for reconstruction and development in order to fund the four programs of action of the Nairobi Pact. Both the ICGLR members and the donor community were meant to pay into this fund.

issues were responsible for implementing the guidelines of the ten protocols. To this end, a total of 45 projects were elaborated. A provision was made to create a special fund for reconstruction and development in order to fund the four programs of action. Both the ICGLR members and the donor community were meant to pay into this fund. In September of 2008, the special fund was created under the African Development Bank. In 2007, a conference secretariat was established in Bujumbura led by ICGLR Executive Secretary Liberata Mulamula.

24 | The key documents of the ICGLR process can be found here: <http://www.icglr.org>.

THE ICGLR AND THE DONOR COMMUNITY – OWNERSHIP BY EXTERNAL RULES?

The history of the Nairobi Pact epitomizes the paradox of the ownership principle called for in large part by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This pact was the result of lengthy negotiations among the ICGLR states. From the onset, it was expected that the ICGLR states would help finance the implementation of the pact. By November 2009, Angola, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia had contributed 3.4 million US dollars into the fund. At the same time, negotiations for the Nairobi Pact were observed by the group of friends, and it was assumed that the donor community would help implement the Nairobi Pact.

The Nairobi Pact was the result of lengthy negotiations among the ICGLR states. It was expected that the ICGLR states would help finance the implementation.

Even during the negotiations of the Nairobi Pact, donors criticized the extent of the programs of action and requested that the projects be prioritized. The group of friends also called for the ICGLR to limit itself to the issues of peace and security. However, the ICGLR states insisted on addressing a broad range of topics. Yet they did comply with the request for prioritized projects in that they named 33 of the 45 projects as priorities.

The projects of the Nairobi Pact are marked by their stark heterogeneity. The role of the ICGLR in implementing these projects is often unclear. For example, the program of action for economic development and regional integration includes a series of infrastructural projects that are not conducted by the ICGLR itself. Rather, these projects rely more heavily on international lobbying and regional coordination for their implementation. Nevertheless, other projects such as the Regional Center for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and Civic Education are to be directly implemented by the ICGLR.

After the signing of the Nairobi Pact, a new stage began in which the project proposals were adapted and refined. Particular areas were clearly pushed as early as the planning stages, for example the regional initiative to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the Regional Center for Democracy to be established in Lusaka.

In November of 2009, an ICGLR donor round table conference was held. The 33 projects that had been negotiated among the member states between 2004 and 2006 were presented once again. The projects' complete implemen-

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tation was set as a benchmark. The total amount of funding required was roughly 1.5 billion US dollars. However, a portion of these funds was supposed to be provided by the national budgets of the ICGLR member states.

Many of the donors had the notion that the ICGLR was to be a political forum where reconciliation and dialogue could be achieved. They believed that it should not, however, dabble in development projects. Hence, the ICGLR did not receive any solid financial commitments from the donor round table conference. Nevertheless, bilateral donors such as Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland and multilateral donors such as UNECA, UNIFEM, and UN-HABITAT did announce that they would continue providing the support they had given thus far.

Thus, there is a conflict between the need for the African partners to take direct responsibility for steering their process of development, the reality of the low finance capacity of many African countries and the fact that, in the end, the donors tie their financial contribution to conditionalities following their own conceptual ideas.

THE ICGLR AS A REGIONAL CONFLICT MEDIATOR

In addition to adapting the programs of action, the ICGLR has emerged as a political actor since the Nairobi Summit of 2006. According to the Nairobi Pact, the task of mediating regional conflicts falls to the ICGLR Summit Troika, made up of the former, current and future Chair of the ICGLR. Executive Secretary Liberata Mulamula has also assumed this task. The ICGLR faces strong competition in the area of conflict mediation. During apparent escalations in conflicts, representatives from the UN, the AU, the EU and from individual states are happy to step in as mediators. This configuration leads to limited visibility of the ICGLR's involvement in this area.

An example of this is the ICGLR involvement in mediation efforts in eastern DR Congo and Burundi. Initially, it collaborated with the UN, the AU, the EU and the United States in directing the peace conference in Goma in January of 2008. Once security worsened in North Kivu despite the Act of Engagement signed in Goma, Executive Secretary Mulamula met with the presidents of the ICGLR states. With this preliminary work in place, the region was able to react relatively quickly and convene a special ICGLR summit on November 7, 2008 in Nairobi, when rebel group CNDP was on the verge of taking Goma by force. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, Chair of the AU Jean Ping and newly appointed UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Olusegun Obasanjo attended this summit, at which former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa was appointed to spearhead the conflict mediation process. Obasanjo and Mkapa began extensive negotiations with Kabila, Kagame and Nkunda. ICGLR Executive Secretary Mulamula was continuously involved in this process and is said to have played an important part behind scenes, particularly during the negotiations with Nkunda.

Once security worsened in North Kivu, Executive Secretary Mulamula met with the presidents of the ICGLR states. With this preliminary work in place, the region was able to react relatively quickly.

The ICGLR ended up acting as a mediator in Burundi during the political crisis related to the May 2010 elections. Their mediation efforts were unsuccessful, however. No solution was found that compel the opposition parties to end their boycott of the elections.

In addition to conflict mediation, election observation is an area in which the IGCLR has also become active. In 2009, an election observation mission was created in the Republic of the Congo. At the special ICGLR summit in January of 2010, the ICGLR received the mandate for election observation missions in Burundi, the Central African Republic, DR Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

DWINDLING SUPPORT AND COMPETITION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

The fact that the donor round table conference was unsuccessful is the clearest sign that support for the ICGLR from essential international and regional actors can no longer be taken for granted. This is apparent given other developments as well.

The African Union took on a leading role in the establishment of the ICGLR through the actions of Special Envoys Walubita and Bah. The ICGLR is not, however, one of the eight regional organizations recognized by the AU. The ICGLR is thereby excluded from AU consultation proceedings and cannot use the AU's forum to voice ICGLR interests.

Another regional organization has also emerged in the Great Lakes Region, attracting to it the interests of several donors. In 2007, the economic community *Communauté Economique des Pays des Grands Lacs* (CEPGL) was revived. Burundi, DR Congo and Rwanda are member of the community originally founded in 1976. The members of the CEPGL are thus much more clearly concentrated in the heart of the Great Lakes Region.

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Re-forming the CEPGL was one of the ICGLR projects in the program of action for economic development and regional integration. Initially, then, its resurgence was in the interest of the ICGLR. Some donors – in particular the EU, Belgium and France – seemed to view the CEPGL as an alternative to the ICGLR, however. This is particularly apparent given the substantial support of 50 million euros provided by the European Commission to develop the CEPGL Conference Secretariat and assist infrastructure projects, and it stands in sharp contrast to the outcome of the ICGLR donor round table conference.²⁵ In March of 2010, the ICGLR finalized a cooperation agreement with the CEPGL in the area of transnational economic development.

25 | Meike Westerkamp, Mora Feil and Alison Thompson, "Regional Cooperation in the Great Lakes Region," Initiative for Peacebuilding, in: http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/pdf/Regional_Cooperation_in_the_Great_Lakes_region.pdf (accessed September 10, 2010).

Time will tell just how successful the ICGLR is in positioning itself as a complementary institution to the CEPGL and in emphasizing its additional value.

Another development that has made some donors question the future purpose of the ICGLR is the bilateral rapprochement of DR Congo and Rwanda. At the beginning of the ICGLR process, they had no diplomatic relations, and as such, the ICGLR provided

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a forum for discussion. Congolese President Joseph Kabila and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, did not use the framework of the ICGLR to rekindle their diplomatic relations, however. Negotiations for their joint military operations in eastern DR Congo took place outside of official meetings. In August of 2009, Kabila and Kagame held a summit in Goma preceded by two days of negotiations at the ministerial level. This summit took place a few days before the third scheduled ICGLR summit, which Kabila and Kagame did not attend. This gave even more of an impression that central regional actors view the ICGLR as an institution of little political import.

THE ICGLR AFTER THE DONOR DEBACLE

The ICGLR does not rely entirely on external funding. The work of the Conference Secretariat is financed by membership contributions from the ICGLR states. As compared to other African regional organizations, the payment behavior of members is relatively good. In 2007, 2008 and 2009, ten of the eleven ICGLR countries provided most of the contributions agreed upon.

After the failure of the donor conference, this allowed the organization to overcome the initial shock and to begin the process of finding strategies. As early as January, the national coordinators elaborated seven strategic axes which are outlined in the resolution of Gitega. The ICGLR is supposed to align its activities with this axes.

Additionally, the regional initiative to fight the illegal exploitation of natural resources has been promoted as a model project. An ICGLR special summit on this issue was held in November of 2010. The ICGLR's actions in

this area are undoubtedly welcomed since the illegal exploitation of natural resources – one of the region's main problems – prolongs existing conflicts. The ICGLR is also the only regional organization with the mandate of addressing this problem. The organization receives support for this issue from Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and UNECA. It participates in committees of the EU and OECD on this topic as well. It also aims to create transparency in the trade of raw materials. For example, it has worked to disclose trade channels for coltan in DR Congo, a massive project that only seems feasible over the long term. There is a risk that this regional initiative may become a fig leaf for the ICGLR members and donors without bringing about any real changes.

In addition to strategic challenges, the ICGLR also faces challenges in filling posts. The first ICGLR Executive Secretary, Liberata Mulamula, will leave her position. The length of the transitional phase and the person who replaces determine whether the ICGLR process is stimulated or weakened by this change.

LONG-TERM RESULTS FROM A ROBUST PROCESS?

This overview of the creation and development of the ICGLR has revealed several paradoxes. The international community has long called for a regional conference model in the Great Lakes Region, but upon closer inspection, there are signs of shortcomings of this model. The international community has made extensive efforts to promote this conference in the region and has provided many resources. At the same time, one main request was that regional actors assume their own responsibility for the process. The ICGLR has taken on its task. A pact for security, stability and development was drafted and ratified, institutional work structures were established and member states have demonstrated good payment behavior in their membership contributions.

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The ICGLR process has also demonstrated a certain amount of sluggishness. It does not have a distinct profile and it is unclear how many key actors in the region still seriously

support the process. The donor community's support for the process has dropped significantly and has become less clearly defined.

It is in its sluggishness that the ICGLR most closely resembles its prototype, the CSCE. The CSCE process experienced several dry spells. Its true impact is difficult to ascertain, and it was not 15 years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act that its impact was visible. It is unlikely that greater efficiency can be expected by applying this European model to an African context than was seen in its original context. The problems and conflicts of the Great Lakes Region are complex and have a long history behind them. With this in mind, no quick results should be expected from a regional conference project. Rather, emphasis should be placed on the long-term impact.

Thus, it remains to be seen whether the ICGLR will develop robustness similar to that of the CSCE despite strong headwinds, thereby leaving a decisive impact on the stabilization of the Great Lakes Region.