



ICGLR – REGIONAL  
MULTIFUNCTIONAL YOUTH

# 1<sup>st</sup> EASTERN AFRICA YOUTH CONFERENCE

## OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH

By

**MR. KENNEDY WALUSALA**

*President of the Great Lakes Regional Multifunctional Youth Forum*

**THEME: BEYOND ME... *It is time to act!***

**At ST. MARY'S PASTORAL CENTRE, NAKURU, KENYA,**

**WEDNESDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2011.**

*The Representative of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Republic of Kenya, Mr. Aggrey Lubanga,*

*Mr. Julius Khakula, Chairman, Initiatives of Change,*

*Ms. Ann Njeri, Co-ordinator, Eastern Africa Youth Conference,*

*Organizers of the Eastern Africa Youth Conference,*

*Distinguished Youth Representatives,*

**Ladies and Gentleman.**

It gives me great pleasure to address and open this 1<sup>st</sup> Eastern Africa Youth Conference with the theme: “**Beyond me... It is time to act**”. I wish to express our gratitude to the conference organizers for ably managing to bring the Youth leaders from Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somali, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda to deliberate on the contributions of the Youth in the region. The conference is being held at a time when most of our Eastern African Countries have gone through General and Presidential elections.

**Fellow Youth, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What has been our contribution in making Africa better? What is our contribution to achieving the Millenium Development Goals? What are we doing currently to end conflicts in our region? What is our plan for the future and the next generation? Our forefathers; Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba just to mention but a few had a vision... independence of African States, and today we live in the legacy that they left, we talk about them, fifty years after the struggle. What is our vision, what legacy do we want to leave behind as youth of our generation?

While we move in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the theme of this Conference states it all: “**Beyond me... It is time to act.**” Africa has been in the media, tainted with a lot of negative issues: conflict, poverty, corruption, impunity, dictatorship... and the list is endless. What should we do to correct the situation? I am extremely sure, that is why we are here today, so that at the end of the five days, we shall have a workable action plan to positively transform our region and impact on the continent.

The transformation of our Region and the entire continent will require clear actions and time frames to achieve our objectives. As Youth, we are meant to be fully involved and aware of what is going on in the Regional Economic Communities and African Union at large. We must have an agenda. The East African Community (EAC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Inter- Governmental Authority on

Development (IGAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the African Union (AU) all require our new energy.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I was asked to share the Youth Progress within the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) that brings together eleven Countries; Angola, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The ICGLR was created through a United Nations Security Council resolution of year 2000 to address the endemic conflicts in the region. Our eleven Heads of State and Government met for the first time in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in November 2004 and signed the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Democracy, Stability and Development. Subsequently, the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government that witnessed the signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2006 and the third Summit of ICGLR was held in August 2009 in Lusaka, Zambia.

There are four key themes that the ICGLR addresses: Peace and Security, Democracy and Good Governance, Economic Development and Regional Integration, and Humanitarian and Social Issues. We also have Cross-Cutting issues that include: Human Rights, Human Settlement, Gender, Environment, HIV-AIDS and Youth.

It is important to note that the eleven Heads of State mandated the Regional Multifunctional Youth Forum (RMYF) as a project of the ICGLR for the eleven Member States to coordinate the issues of the Youth. We held our first regional Summit in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in May 2010 where I was elected President by the Member States. A subsequent second meeting was endorsed to be held in the first half of this year. We the Youth have been given anew opportunity to organize ourselves and coordinate our activities. During the Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010, we addressed our Heads of State in transforming the Great Lakes Region from conflict ridden to the zone of peace and prosperity.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For us to concretely achieve our goal, we need to be more committed, aggressive, honest and patient. For a long time, we have been divided with many different political party ideologies, tribal alienations, language differences and country alienations. We must have a Regional Common Agenda and our greatest strength is our numbers. I believe **“it is time to act now.”**

The future of our continent squarely depends on our actions today. In our deliberations, let's examine solutions that will end conflict, poverty, corruption, impunity and usher in a new crop of selfless responsible leaders to transform our continent for our generation and the next generations to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

In conclusion, I wish to challenge all of you to take up leadership positions in the political, economical and social arenas in our member countries and at regional and continental level. Let's all rise to the occasion and make a positive difference.

Finally, allow me to sincerely thank the Government and the people of Kenya for their warm hospitality extended to us on our arrival here in Nakuru and accepting to hold this 1<sup>st</sup> Conference in Kenya.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the Organizers of the Eastern Africa Youth Conference for inviting the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At this juncture, I declare the meeting officially open.

Thank you for your attention.

Kennedy Walusala

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