COMMUNIQUE OF THE REGIONAL CSO EXPERTS MEETING ON SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

October 31, 2011
Arusha, Tanzania

We, members of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) under the Chairperson of the Regional Civil Society Forum held a Regional CSOs Experts meeting in Arusha, Tanzania from 30th to 31st October, 2011, under the theme, **United to Prevent, End Impunity and Provide Support to the Survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the Great Lakes Region,**

Welcome the decision by Heads of State of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to hold a Special Session on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Kampala, Uganda in December 2011;

Cognizant of the efforts of the Member States of the Great Lakes Region to address the pervasive sexual and gender based violence affecting women, men and children in the region;

Recognizing that the Member States have ratified the ICGLR Protocol on Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children (2006);

Noting that SGBV is a security issue particularly for women and children, requiring urgent attention for the advancement of peace, security and sustainable development in the region;

Noting with deep concern the slow progress made by Member States thus far in addressing SGBV relative to the magnitude of the problem;

The Civil Society Organizations present, drawing from research, evidence-based interventions, survivors' testimonies and evidence from communities in the Great Lakes Region, highlight the following critical challenges:

- Inadequate leadership and accountability for prosecuting crimes of SGBV at all levels;
- Inadequate resourcing of the relevant government institutions responsible for SGBV prevention, response, prosecution, and support to survivors (for example, legal aid, legal literacy, material, medical and psychosocial support to victims);
- Perpetration of SGBV by security and law enforcement agents responsible for the protection of citizens;
- Lack of a comprehensive performance measurement framework to track progress on implementation of policies, laws and commitments related to SGBV;
- Critical issues of comprehensive access to justice for survivors of SGBV (expediency in dispensing SGBV cases; lack of gender sensitive courts, legal aid and legal rights education; absence of forensic services; need for 'one-stop' centres and meaningful reparations)

We therefore strongly urge the Heads of State of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region to be at the frontline of the fight against SGBV and:

1. Declare ***Zero Tolerance Now*** on SGBV crimes and impunity;

2. Allocate specific and adequate **funding for SGBV prevention programmes** within a Gender Responsive Budgeting Framework;

3. Institutionalise **community policing** in the prevention, early warning and response to SGBV, in collaboration with the security service sector;

4. Establish an independent **Regional Impunity Monitoring Unit** by the next Summit of the Heads of State, to thereafter report on progress annually to the ICGLR Ordinary Summit of Heads of State;

5. Establish national **Reparation Funds** for survivors of SGBV by the next ICGLR Ordinary Summit of Heads of State;

6. Adopt a **comprehensive SGBV performance framework** (in the form of an Index or Barometer) with clear standards and targets, with opportunity for civil society to present shadow or parallel reports;

7. Launch the Regional CSO Forum during the Heads of State Summit in Kampala, December 15-16, 2011.

Done in Arusha this 31st Day of October, 2011

ACORD
Action Aid International
African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
Akina Mama wa Afrika
Association des Femmes Juristes de Centrafrique
Association des Femmes Juristes du Congo
CARE International
Centre for Environmental and Social Justice - Kenya
Coalition on Violence Against Women – Kenya (COVAW-K)
Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)
Consultative Umbrella of Women Associations in the Great Lakes Region (COCAFEM/GL)
Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI)
Equality Now
Forum for Women Journalists for Gender Equality – Angola
Isis-WICCE
National Council of Women of Kenya
PROFEMME – TWESE HAMWE - Rwanda
Regional Associates for Community Initiatives (RACI) - Uganda
Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR)
Solidarity with the Victims and for Peace (SOVIP) – Democratic Republic of Congo
Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)
Sudan Domestic Election Monitoring and Observation Programme (SUDEMOP)
Synergie des Partenaires pour la Promotion des Droits de la Femme (SPPDF- Burundi)
Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP)
Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA)
Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Zambia