

OPENING REMARKS AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE NICHE PROJECT

MUHABURA Hotel/Musanze, 29TH MARCH 2017

By Mrs. Grace KYOMUHENDO BYARUHANGA,

GVTC Deputy Executive Secretary in charge of Finance & Administration

1. Protocol in the dignitaries present

Welcome representatives

- ICCN, RDB, UWA
- Netherlands Embassy- Kigali

Partners

IGCP, ITFC, OVG, INES,

Universities

- University of Rwanda
- Makerere University
- University of Kisangani
- University of Graben
- Kitabi College of Conservation and Environmental Management

Consortium ó

- Lead Partner in the Consortium -Free University of Amsterdam, (VU)
- University of Ghent
- Search for Common Ground

Not forgetting my Colleagues from GVTC, Protocol observed.

Talking points

2. This occasion marks yet another landmark achievement by GVTC and its partners towards improved conservation, inclusive growth, peace and stability of GVL.
3. We are greatly indebted to the Netherlands Government through the Netherlands Embassy in Kigali for the continued support over the last 10 years, for without which (this partnership), we would not have come this far. In a similar spirit, we are grateful to our partners in the landscape that have made it possible to effectively and efficiently make use of the several grants, without which it would have been impossible to get yet another grant that has brought us here today.
4. The Greater Virunga Landscape is a land of great opportunities arising from its natural resourcefulness that include a variety of ecosystems (tropical and temperate forest, wetlands, savannah grasslands, lakes, rivers etc.), minerals and fertile soils

which in turn make it a hub for researchers, tourism, agricultural products, energy and all forms of trade based on these resources. Consequently, the GVL has also attracted a large human population and it has the largest rural population density in Africa.

5. This situation sets in competition for resources, ranging from family level through community to national, regional and International levels. As competition stiffens, the natural principle of "survival *for the fittest*" sets in. As a result natural equity of resource benefit sharing no longer applies and those more powerful or with more influence and networks accumulate the benefits while the bulk remain poor and more dependent on the natural resources. The GVL therefore has been a hotspot of conflicts of all magnitudes.
6. Under such circumstances, sustainable resource management becomes difficult.
7. While GVL is seen as one landscape, historical events of the partitioning of Africa divided it into three countries of DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. This partitioning also provided another dimension of Conflicts and therefore enhanced the un sustainable resource management within GVL
8. This context implies that the potential development of the GVL remains heavily under-utilized and continues to have implications on the management, use and exploitation of the resources in this region.
9. The Three party states, through many years of negotiations, came to a common position and signed the GVTC treaty (2015) that provided a transboundary collaboration framework of both state and non-state parties in the conservation of GVL resources, inclusive growth and associated conflict resolution.
10. The Niche project "Enhancing Capacity in Natural Resource Management and Conflict Resolution for Stability and Inclusive Growth in the Greater Virunga Landscape" is a timely intervention. It will provide capacity-building support to enhance professionalism and human resource development for continued coordination of the various state and non-state actors in sustainable improved conservation of transboundary natural resources management. It will also address the potential impact of climate change, associated conflicts management and peace building in the Greater Virunga Landscape region in particular and in the Africa's Great Lakes Region in general.
11. Through this project, GVTC and its partners will have increased capacity to understand the regional characteristics on the use of natural resources and dynamics and contribute to the resolution of regional conflicts and inclusive growth in GVL through the strengthening of local and regional education, training and research capacity.
12. GVTC therefore looks forward with enthusiasm and optimism that as this project comes to end, four years from now, the landscape will have sufficient inbuilt capacity to have sustainable professional human resource to deliver sustainable conservation of GVL resources for inclusive growth and minimal conflicts.
13. Before I close my remarks, I would like to re-assure the Consortium that the GVTC Executive Secretariat as well as all partners involved in this project are committed to run this project efficiently and effectively to achieve its intended objectives for long-term sustainability of Natural resource management.
14. I wish you all a successful launch.
15. I take this opportunity to invite the representative from RDB, Dr. Tony Mudakikwa to officially open this launch.