

**GREAT LAKES POLICY FORUM
MEETING NOTES
MAY 2, 2002**

At this month's forum we heard from Ambassador Ould-Abdallah, Executive Secretary of the Global Coalition for Africa, Ambassador Sezibera, Ambassador of Rwanda to the United States, and Dr. Cindy Courville, Director for African Affairs at the National Security Council. The topic, presented and discussed from several different angles, was the progress and outcome of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, and obstacles to and prospects for the Congolese peace process for the post-Sun City period.

A follow – up to last month's meeting, as the ICD drew to a close, how we view the outcomes, what they were, how to move the peace process forward. Among the participants of the meetings, were observers to Sun City.

Congo's Background to the ICD

It is very important to understand the background of the conflict in order to analyze most effectively the outcome of the Sun City talks.

First, Congo, formally Zaire, has lived through oppression, suffering and misery for a long time. Since independence in 1960, there has been a great deal of war within this country, yet non-Congolese did most of the fighting.

Secondly and linked to the first point, Congo has been a country with little to no administration or effective government for many years. Its uncontrolled borders thus challenge the security of its neighbors, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Angola.

Thirdly, Congo is immensely rich in mineral and timber resources as well as agricultural land. These riches constitute a continued, permanent attraction to both its own leadership, which has never shown good management, as well as its neighbors, both individually and as governments.

Fourthly, the Great Lakes region has witnessed genocide of vast magnitude. 800,000 to one million people were brutally murdered by hand within the span of a mere one hundred days. This tragedy is still very much alive in the mentality of people. With the international community still supporting refugees, among whom many are armed, and with this psychological dimension of war very much present in the mind of the Congolese, this conflict is impossible for us to ignore.

Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD)

The Inter- Congolese Dialogue (ICD), originally designed to include 125 people and to last for 45 days, evolved to 364 representatives mainly from the three groups of MLC, government and organizations from civil society and the unarmed opposition, and lasted for 52 days. President Masire organized five commissions to address the vast agenda: Economic, Human and Social, Reconstruction and Reconciliation, Political Transition, and Army Disarmament.

Overall, the dialogue was useful, thanks to funding from the European Community and the support of governments including South Africa, Belgium, US and Canada. Although

rarely mentioned, three commissions made significant and notable progress with 37 documents adopted by consensus in the areas of economy, humanitarian and social action and reconciliation. Predictably, the two main issues fundamental to the outcome of peace and too difficult to resolve were the political transition and the military. Since solutions to these issues must be included as part of the final settlement it should not be viewed as a failure of the ICD that they were not resolved within the Sun City deliberations. Perhaps the facilitation should have and could have proposed its own solution. However, two proposals were developed by South African leader Thabo Mbeki and between the Kinshasa government and the MLC.

In some people's views, the South African proposal gave too much power and visibility to people without credibility or a real base. For example, Mbeki's suggestion was to appoint a Prime Minister from a civil society organization, a speaker of the house from NGOs or political parties and a government constituted by a Supreme Council chaired by President Kabila and including the Presidents of the RCD, MLC and the Prime Minister.

Two days after this deal was rejected the MLC and government made their own agreement, which was adopted on the spot by 75 % of political parties and 80% of civil society.

One should view this agreement as better than nothing, and a good basis upon which to build and include the absent players (though namely the RCD because of its such a key actor. It is important to keep some high level positions (security, defense and justice) open for the RCD because these are the main concerns of minorities.

Role of External Actors

Within the Congolese peace process, just as in the Arusha process, the role of external actors comes under scrutiny. The 37 documents adopted within the framework of the Sun City talks should be applauded and the deal brokered by the MLC and the government should be recognized as it was by the European Union and the UN Secretary General as a "sign of progress that could facilitate for political transition".

If the international community is not forthcoming, then we may face a number of problems. Lusaka, like many international agreements, was not signed on the spot, thus it is unrealistic to expect that the products of the ICD would be anything but part of an incremental process. It is important that the international community sends the message that while the progress that has been made so far is significant; it needs to be built upon to include the other players. Supporting the agreement would encourage the MLC and the government to do what they must and work together. Furthermore, it is crucial that the international community, which must notably include African members such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, support what is the beginning of peace instead of considering it outside their agenda. This is what happened during the 1998 gov an buyo and the parliament must do it in otherwise not accepted.....hard to define respon as external.....help peace not suppor our agenda not excaberatin..Arusha process when an agreement between and not providing the necessary support a

needs to be examined closely Ex of burund agreemnt not in arusha so we didn't support it...It is important that ...excabatin tension....if we act, how to help?
...deserves not to be rejected ...and if so, why? (itnl com sa, z...etc) need to support beginning of peace...not say its outside of agenda....are we supporting peace or our own agenda?

Need to help govn and mlc.....they are both fragile and they won't help ...can't have weak.....

If bring in external actors...work cut out for next 5-10 yrs.....must supor local agenda if you do bring them in..

Sezibera

The thoughts of the Rw gov on the ICD dialogue are merely thoughts shared when asked. Lusaka pillars include the cessation of hostilities, the disengagement of forces, demobilization and reintegration of non- signatory armed forces and withdrawal of foreign troops. It's a comprehensive and interlocking agreement. Thsu Rwandan opinions are within that process. Rw gov would like the Lusaka process to do it what it needs to and disarm negative forces like Ex-far that would allow for the withdrawal of all foreign forces including those from Rwanda.

Within that context, there are several key problems within the Congolese Peace process and the Great Lakes region in general. The first is the failure to resolve the question of the Interahamwe. The second major problem is the role that the international community played in allowing the ICD not to fulfill its potential. While significant progress was made in a number of committees and notably even within the defense committee, ultimately power-sharing was the deadlock issue. Ultimately, the Rwandan government has no opinion on how the DRC fashions its transitional government as long as it does so within the framework of the Lusaka agreement.

The Sun City talks began with a number of polarized positions surrounding the controversial issue of the presidency. A compromise solution proposed by the host country and tabled by the facilitator, was open to amendments. While the RCD and the MLC had amendments, the DRC government did not present any. On (APRIL?) 19th, during the time when they were supposed to be discussing these amendments, the DRC and MLC proposed an agreement that had fashioned outside of the confines of Lusaka peace process. Although the facilitator made the point that any proposals must be shared with a plenary, this deal was not discussed with the others and thus both its process and content were not inclusive. Therefore, the Rwandan government feels it cannot support the MLC-Government agreement due to the process by which it was reached. Furthermore, while all the other participants to the ICD left behind delegates