

Communiqué

Sea change needed to bring lasting peace in the DRC

November 23, 2012 : The taking of Goma in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by the March 23 Movement (M23) is a major affront to international law and to the largest and most expensive United Nations peacekeeping mission in operation. It has intensified an already alarming humanitarian crisis. The proven involvement of Rwanda, which is a member of the Security Council of the United Nations, in the military operations of a rebel group within Congolese territory places the international community in an uncharted situation that requires new strategies.

These latest events reveal facts that must be taken into consideration to put an end to the ongoing and repeating crises imposed on the people of eastern DRC:

- In violation of international law, Rwanda and Uganda are supporting the M23 rebellion that threatens the territorial integrity of the Congo. They must necessarily be part of the solution to the crisis. However, it should be noted that they are also part of the problem. A review of bilateral relations with each country is required.
- The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), whose creation has been greatly supported by the Group of Friends of the region, particularly in Canada, has lost its credibility and has not demonstrated its ability to enforce its members' Pact on Peace, Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region adopted in 2006 and brought into force in 2008.
- The Congolese political authorities in place from the latest election with unverifiable results have very limited legitimacy among the population. This greatly limits their ability to provide a consensual and lasting solution to this crisis.

In these circumstances, and given the seriousness of the current crisis, the Government of Canada should:

- Demand a cease-fire and the respect for humanitarian law by all sides: M23, FARDC and their allied militias, as well as by foreign troops in the DRC;
- Deliver emergency humanitarian assistance to displaced populations throughout affected territory;
- Condemn Rwanda and Uganda for the support they give to the M23, demand an end to such aid and impose sanctions against these regimes (arms embargo, questioning their participation in international organizations, etc.);
- Call on the Sanctions Committee of the United Nations to include on its list of individuals and entities, Rwandan and Ugandan leaders involved in the destabilizing activities of M23 that have led to serious abuses against civilians, abuse for which they are directly or indirectly responsible;
- Press for MONUSCO, rather than a hypothetical ICGLR force, to be given the mandate to monitor the border between Rwanda and the DRC.

Signatory groups:

L'Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI), Carrefour Foi et Spiritualité de Bordeaux-Cartierville, Carrefour Tiers-Monde Québec, Development and Peace, Kairos - Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, L'Entraide missionnaire, Terre sans Frontières, United Church of Canada.

Background to the current crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Since the beginning of the current clashes last April, 650,000 people have fled their homes to seek refuge with relatives, in camps, or in neighbouring countries. Only a few days ago sixty thousand people in the Kanyaruchinya camp, as well as occupants of three camps near the city, fled to Goma, which has made the situation there a major humanitarian emergency.

Human rights groups have been reporting that these people in flight have faced constant abuse and threats of all kinds, from the rape of women and girls to the forced recruitment of children by competing forces, whether the M23, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) or the many Mai Mai militias associated with these groups.

This latest episode of this war, more or less overt since it began in 1996, reveals a dismal failure of the countries of the international community that have carried out a multitude of programs for pacification, stabilization, or reconstruction in the DRC at a cost of billions of dollars. From the creation of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) in 1996, to the Coalition of Congolese Democracy (RCD-Goma), the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) and now the M23, an armed group, politically and militarily supported by Rwanda, and sometimes by Uganda, now controls the resources, taxes, and the whole economy of a territory and demands the overthrow of the government in Kinshasa or the political and administrative control of a part of the country.

The latest report of the Expert Group of the United Nations (November 15 2012) confirmed the direct involvement of Rwanda, and to a lesser extent Uganda, in the rise of this new rebellion formed largely out of the CNDP. In 2008, again with support from Rwanda, the rebellion had threatened to take Goma. As in 1996, again in 1998, and again now, Kigali has denied any involvement in Congolese territory despite recurring testimony to the contrary from the local population, international NGOs, the UN Mission for Stabilization of Congo (MONUSCO) and United Nations experts.

In response to the support of Rwanda and Uganda to this new rebellion, the Kinshasa government has embarked on a muscular campaign of patriotic mobilization and diplomacy that hardly manages to conceal its neglect of the reform democratic institutions as well as the security and justice sectors.

Moreover, the revelations of the Expert Group on the role of Rwanda and Uganda have greatly damaged the credibility of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), of which these countries are members, to mediate the conflict, even more so now that the mandate to preside over the proceedings of the crisis has been entrusted to President Museveni of Uganda.

In 2008, the injunctions of Western countries prevented the capture of Goma by the CNDP, and in order to end the crisis, they then supported an agreement between Presidents Kabila and Kagame and the appointment of rebel leaders, some facing warrants of arrest from the International Criminal Court, to command posts in the national army. But today, after major donors to Rwanda such as the European Union, the United States, Britain and Sweden decided to put pressure on Kigali to stop its support for the M23, after MONUSCO has shown its determination to prevent the fall of the city, the M23, supported by Rwanda's military, seized Goma, presenting everyone with a fait accompli. This opens the door once again to unknown prospects imposed on the population by force of arms.

During his visit to Kinshasa at the 14th Summit of the Francophonie, Prime Minister Harper praised the experience and approaches developed in Canada to strengthen the link between resource extraction, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Given the prominence of Canadian extractive companies in the DRC, including in the eastern region of the country, Canada should strengthen its commitment to peace in the DRC, as a prerequisite for any sustainable development strategy.

If the international community, and Canada in particular, wishes to fulfill its commitments to the rule of law (international, humanitarian, commercial), and to peace, and if it wishes to stop spending billions of dollars on an inefficient peace mission that does not succeed in even protecting women from sexual violence; if they wish stop the constant funding of humanitarian and reconstruction programs that have no

successful outcomes, they should review the failure of policies to date in light of the facts revealed by recent events.

For more information:

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