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**Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes in
Africa**



MEDIA MONITORING

27 July 2015

GENERAL NEWS

As Obama becomes first US leader to address African Union, the agenda in Ethiopia, including 'third-termism'

NEWS STORY

Source: Mail & Guardian Africa

Since the 1990s, 34 African nations have provided for two-term limits, but only in 20% of these have term limits been complied with.

27 July 2015 - US president Barack Obama arrived in Ethiopia Sunday for a two day visit where he will become the first American leader to address either the African Union, the 54-member continental bloc, or its predecessor the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

AU Commission chief Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said it would be an “historic visit” and be a “concrete step to broaden and deepen the relationship between the AU and the US.”

Ahead of Obama’s visit the Addis Ababa University’s Institute for Peace and Security Studies outlined five key areas (abridged) that may inform his historic address.

1: The way forward for South Sudan

National Security Advisor Susan Rice has confirmed this issue would be on the agenda, as the AU mulls sending troops to South Sudan. The conflict, which started in 2013, has

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raged for 19 months now without a peace agreement in sight. Regional bloc IGAD has tried to mediate between the two factions led by incumbent president Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar, but the process has not yielded tangible results so far.

The US is a major actor in the peace process, with the new country one of the largest recipients of American bilateral aid in sub-Saharan Africa. Washington was also instrumental in helping the young country gain independence and form its troubled government.

Many analysts believe that the international community could have done more in preventing the civil war, and now after the fact, in cutting a deal. The visit by Obama could help exert more pressure on both Kiir and Machar to end the conflict that has cost tens of thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands.

2: Dealing with terrorist groups

Obama's visit to the AU is also expected to focus on combating terrorist groups across the continent. In addition, some of these terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, have pledged their allegiance to Al Qaeda and ISIS, further underlining the international nature of their activities.

In Nairobi, Obama declared that his government would strongly stand with Kenya in the fight against extremism, "however long it took".

3: The US role in peace support operations in Africa

The relationship between the US and the AU peace support operations so far been complementary, in which the US assists with finance, training, logistics, and at times direct military action. Since 2009, the US has committed nearly \$900 million to develop African peacekeeping capacity and strengthen African institutions. It has trained and equipped more than a quarter-million African troops and police for service in UN and AU peacekeeping.

The US also announced during the US-Africa Leaders Summit in 2014 the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP), a new investment of \$110 million per year for 3-5 years to build the capacity of African militaries to rapidly deploy peacekeepers in response to emerging conflict. It is also engaged in aiding regional organisations in Africa and their brigades towards the realisation of the Africa Standby Force (ASF). Obama's visit would be an opportunity in bolstering US assistance to the AU peacekeeping effort.

4: Supporting the Mali peace deal

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The conflict in Mali that erupted in 2012 is not just between the western interests of halting Islamic extremism in the area, which saw military intervention of France in 2013; and the proliferation of Islamic extremist groups who hijacked the socio-economic and political questions of the Tuareg rebels. Rather, the conflict revolves around the socio-economic issues that have been raised by the Tuareg rebels for years. ??A peace deal was finally signed on June 20, 2015 which reportedly confers more autonomy to the Azawad region.

Its relevance to the region is significant not just in dealing with the structural causes of the conflict but also drying up the environment for extremist groups to work in. Thus the visit by Obama may help cement the agreement and pressure both parties to respect and work for the sustenance of the agreement. The US once faced attacks from the extremist groups that had once controlled northern Mali. US congressman Edward R. Royce had said that the Al Qaeda franchise in Mali was the fastest growing and was associated with the attacks on the US compound in Benghazi, Libya in 2012 and the kidnapping of US citizens in Algeria in 2013.

5: 'Third-termism' across the continent

Third termism is now one of the peace and security issues in Africa posing a danger to democratic transfer of power, and the precedent it continues to set when incumbent leaders change constitutions to enable them run for third and more terms is disappointing. Presidential terms limits mostly for two terms are common in Africa. Since the 1990s, 34 constitutions had provided for two-term limits; however only in 20% of these constitutions have term limits been complied with. In Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza was elected for a third term despite calls by the East African Community (EAC), the UN, and the African Union to postpone the elections.

It also seems that Rwanda, a key US ally, is set to allow President Paul Kagame to seek a third term, which the US opposes. Six African countries including Rwanda are holding elections in the next two years (the others are Central African Republic in 2015, and Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon in 2016), further elevating the issue. The visit to the AU therefore invites the question: will Obama stress the implications of the term limits on democracy and further push the bloc to uphold a firm stand against this?

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DRC

Ugandan rebels kill three women in DR Congo raid

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

Goma, 24 July 2015 - Ugandan rebels have killed three women during an overnight raid in the northeast of Democratic Republic of Congo, a research group and the provincial governor said Friday.

"ADF jihadists," Muslim fighters in the Alliance of Democratic Forces from neighbouring Uganda, attacked Mayi-Moya in strife-prone North Kivu province on Thursday evening, the Study Centre for the Promotion of Peace, Democracy and Human Rights (Cepadho) said in a statement.

"During this attack, the terrorists killed three civilians (women) and burned down four buildings, including a home and three shops," the statement said, adding that three people had been killed in a previous raid on the village late in June.

North Kivu's governor Julien Paluku said that "yesterday around 7:00 pm (1700 GMT) there was an "incursion by the ADF rebels, who attacked a military position" and then "killed three women and burned about 10 homes."

The Congolese army, which has launched operations against the insurgents infamous for mass killings of civilians, battled the ADF forces, Paluku said, but he was unable to give any casualty figures.

The village of Mayi-Moya lies 45 kilometres (29 miles) north of the equatorial market town of Beni, where some contingents of the large UN peacekeeping force in the country are based.

Suspected ADF rebels massacred nine civilians on July 14 in the Beni territory, where the Islamic extremists are accused of killing more than 400 people, mostly by hacking them to death.

Government troops launched an offensive against them last Saturday and announced on Tuesday that they had captured a strategic rebel position in the region, where the ADF runs a lucrative illicit trade in timber.

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While North Kivu suffered greatly in the First and Second Congo Wars (1996-2003), the province was already troubled by armed conflict over land and between ethnic groups, as well as struggles to win control of its substantial mineral reserves.

Uganda-DR Congo talks hit snag

NEWS STORY

Source: New Vision

By Acan Proscovia

26 July 2015 - EFFORTS by Ugandan and Congolese officials to solve the border dispute have again hit a snag. This was after the two countries failed to agree on a common position. The stand-off led to the closure of the border point at Vurra in Arua district a couple of weeks ago after the Congolese extended the border line at Vurra customs post by about 300m into Ugandan territory and erected some structures. The Ugandan delegation led by the ambassador to DR Congo, James Kinobe, who was visibly disappointed after the discussions were futile said interest by other people had affected the negotiations. “The symptoms of the problem have been there for a very long time and that is why the presidents in Ngurdoto had agreed to leave the people to stay where they were until the technical committee works out the methods of marking out the borders to indicate where they stop” he said. He appealed to the Kinshasha government to prevail over Congolese authorities in the disputed area who he said have fear in enforcing the resolutions. The major problem I see here is that on the Congolese side, the government has failed to prevail over the ordinary people” he added. In the heated meeting also attended by the Mahagi area MP Pierrot Uweka, the Congolese said they will not remove the barrier but insisted that Uganda opens its border.

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RWANDA

Rwanda: I Hope Kagame 'Defies' Masses on Term Limits

OPINION

Source: The Observer (Kampala)

By Moses Khisa

26 July 2015 - The people of Rwanda are demanding that the Constitution be amended to allow President Paul Kagame stand again in 2017.

It is easy to find this demand on the streets of Rwanda's capital, Kigali. But you will also find opposition, albeit in hushed tones.

The debate is raging. The person whom it concerns the most, Kagame, insists the debate must go on. Part of the debate has turned on the very prohibitive wording of Article 101: "... Under no circumstances shall a person hold the Office of the President of the Republic for more than two terms."

Recently, more than 3.5 million signatures were presented to parliament, which last week voted overwhelmingly to start the process of amending the Constitution. It's quite evident that only one outcome is likely - article 101 will be deleted or changed to read differently.

Other than a complete deletion of the two-term limit provision, one option being floated is to insert a clause providing for a referendum on a third term for a specific leader. One way or the other, it is a foregone conclusion. Here is why.

On Wednesday, I interviewed the chairman of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), also minister for natural resources, Dr Vincent Biruta. This ministry, like most government offices in Kigali, is housed in a plush building with a corporate outlook and clear signs of an evidently-functional public body, unlike the filth and neglect that attends government offices in many African countries.

I told Minister Biruta that it was rather strange for his party, supposedly the main opposition political party, to endorse the process of removing term limits so Kagame stands again yet they can't beat him in an election.

"It's the people, not us the leaders," he reasoned. He continued: "they believe that they cannot as yet trust another leader other than Kagame. He has been such a high-performing president and the people want him to continue."

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I reminded Dr Biruta that the mark of leadership is the courage to stand above the wishes and sentiments of the masses. If masses were the ones to always dictate what should be done, then the very notion of leadership would lose meaning.

At any rate, I added, he, as the leader of the second largest party, should be pushing for alternative leadership and a culture of sustainability and continuity, instead of putting all hopes in one mortal being.

President Kagame finds himself in a very precarious situation. He is a man known to rigidly stick to his beliefs and principles. Will he hold out or will he succumb to the "demands of the people?" He has been on record for making two very important statements.

First, that he would not seek another term after serving the two constitutional ones. Second, that it is not true that no one else is capable enough to take over from him; and if it were true then, that would mean he, as a leader, has failed and should for that very reason step down.

Sources close to him say he regrets not taking the issue of succession seriously and not preparing ahead of time. Now 2017 is in sight and Kagame finds that, even without the popular demand for him to stay, he is not quite ready to relinquish power.

His controversial involvement in the Congo, coupled with some internal dynamics, make it risky for him to leave power without sufficient guarantees that he will not end up somewhere in detention as happened last month to his chief of intelligence, General Emmanuel Karenzi Karake, arrested and still held in London.

Kagame's Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) was birthed and groomed in Uganda. Its affable and highly-regarded founding leader, the late Major General Fred Rwigyema, was Uganda's deputy army commander. Rwigyema's RPF successor, then Major Paul Kagame, was a senior Ugandan intelligence officer in what was then called Directorate of Military Intelligence, headed by the then Colonel Mugisha Muntu.

It is possible that at the time Rwigyema and his compatriots launched their struggle to return home, on October 1, 1990, they were seeing glimpses of the rot that the NRM government eventually fully became. When Museveni's misrule shot through the roof in the late 1990s, with glaring scandals of malfeasance in the privatization of state corporations, shoddy deals in military procurements and ghost soldiers, Kagame must have watched keenly.

As president of Rwanda, he had a perfect living example of a government next door, and one grossly mismanaged by his politico-military mentor, with clear lessons on how not to run a government. He had to strive to be different. Today, Rwanda has achieved

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what Uganda can't realize under the decadent regime of General Museveni, notwithstanding Kagame's much-talked-about poor record on civil liberties and individual freedoms.

Now enter the term limits debate. Perhaps again committed to being different from Uganda, at the time Museveni was manipulating the constitutional amendment process in 2003-5, including bribing MPs to remove term limits, Rwanda was promulgating a new Constitution with an article stating unequivocally: "under no circumstance shall a person... "

General Museveni must be keeping his fingers crossed that General Kagame yields to the "demands of the people!"

BURUNDI

US blasts Burundi elections as 'deeply flawed'

NEWS STORY

Source: France24

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called Burundi's election this week "deeply flawed" and urged President Pierre Nkurunziza to hold a "meaningful, serious" dialogue with the African country's opposition, the State Department said.

25 July 2015 - Nkurunziza won a third term in office on Friday after the opposition boycotted the vote, accusing him of violating the constitution by running for re-election.

The election commission said on Friday that the president, who cited a court ruling saying he could run again, had secured 73 percent of the vote.

Nkurunziza's re-election bid has plunged Burundi into its biggest crisis since an ethnically charged civil war ended in 2005. Dozens of people have been killed in weeks of protests and more than 170,000 have fled to refugee camps in neighbouring states.

"It is imperative that the government of Burundi re-engage in a meaningful, serious dialogue with opposition and civil society leaders to reach a consensus on the way forward," Kerry said in a statement on Friday, declaring the vote "deeply flawed".

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The ruling CNDD-FDD party dismissed U.S. criticism of the election that came even before voting began. Party chief Pascal Nyabenda said U.S. officials' remarks were "negative and nihilistic" and implied "the Burundian people cannot rule themselves".

Weeks of talks between the government, opposition parties, civil society groups and others failed to resolve differences.

Leading opposition politician, Agathon Rwasa, who boycotted the vote, has called for a government of national unity. The government has said it was open to the idea but ruled out conditions such as shortening the president's term.

The European Union and African Union did not send observers to the vote because they said the whole process was not credible.

Neighbouring east African nations, which did send observers, said voting was generally calm on Tuesday but the process "fell short of the principles and standards for holding free, fair, peaceful, transparent and credible elections".

It cited issues such as violence that preceded voting and security worries among the population, restrictions on the media and a boycott of the voting by opposition parties.

The African states also called for dialogue.

Opponents stayed away from the June 29 parliamentary polls, which Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD party also won, and Tuesday's presidential vote.

Obama Says Burundi Elections 'Not Credible'

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

27 July 2015 - President Barack Obama said the recent elections in Burundi were "not credible" and has called for talks between the government and opposition.

Obama spoke in Nairobi Saturday, one day after Burundi's electoral commission said President Pierre Nkurunziza had won a controversial third term.

President Obama said he and Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta discussed Burundi and want to see "a dialogue that leads to a political solution to the crisis and avoids the loss of more innocent life."

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In Addis Ababa, Burundi's Foreign Minister Alan Nyamitwe dismissed international criticism of the election, saying no one can disregard the choice made by the people of Burundi.

Burundi's opposition parties, which boycotted the election, have denounced Tuesday's presidential election and demanded new elections.

They argue Nkurunziza is violating a two-term limit in the constitution.

Court OKs term

A Burundian court ruled the president was eligible for a third five-year term because he was elected by parliament, not voters, for his first term in 2005.

The election commission announced Friday that Nkurunziza had won 69 percent of the vote, 50 percentage points ahead of his nearest challenger, Agathon Rwasa.

In a statement, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the U.S. is "deeply disappointed" by Nkurunziza's "use of undemocratic means to maintain power through an electoral process that was neither credible nor legitimate."

Nkurunziza's re-election bid plunged Burundi into its biggest crisis since the end of the civil war in 2005.

More than 100 people were killed during several weeks of protests and more than 170,000 have fled to refugee camps in neighboring countries.

Nkurunziza survived a coup attempt in May when he was out of the country.

EAC: Burundi elections not credible

NEWS STORY

Source: World Bulletin

26 July 2015 - The East African Community (EAC) has slammed last week's presidential polls in Burundi, saying they failed to meet the EAC's standards for holding free, transparent and credible elections.

"The election process in Burundi was hampered by insecurity, a tense environment, limited media freedom and the violation of fundamental human, civil and political rights," Abubakar Zein, head of the EAC's election observer mission, told Anadolu Agency.

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Speaking by phone from Mombasa, Kenya, Zein said that EAC poll observers had found a lack of freedom of speech and press during last week's controversial poll.

"The boycott by the main opposition parties and unsuccessful efforts to build consensus through inclusive dialogue... were among the other issues that hampered the elections," he said.

The observer mission released its preliminary report to the EAC Secretariat only days after Burundi's official electoral commission announced that incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza had won the election with almost 70 percent of the vote.

The EAC is an East African regional bloc comprising Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda.

Burundi Group Rejects Nkurunziza to Head Unity Government

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

26 July 2015 - The chief executive officer of the Forum for Strengthening the Civil Society (FORSC) in Burundi says President Pierre Nkurunziza should not be part of any unity government.

Vital Nshimirimana's remarks follow violent unrest in Burundi since Mr. Nkurunziza announced he would run for a third term. Critics charge an Nkurunziza third term violates the constitution as well as the Arusha Accord that ended a civil war.

The country's courts ruled he is eligible for a third term because he was chosen by lawmakers, and not popularly elected, for his first term in 2005. The political crisis has forced more than 140,000 to flee to neighboring countries.

Nshimirimana says he welcomes the international community's rejection of the outcome of the July 21 presidential election, which Mr. Nkurunziza won with 69.41 percent of the 2.8 million total votes cast.

"The government of national unity cannot go with President Nkurunziza as a member. He cannot because once he decided to break the Burundian consensus that put to an end the deadly conflict ... This means that he does not deserve to be at that bench. He has lost his legitimacy to be part of the Burundian stakeholders since he decided to break all what Burundians have built over the years," said Nshimirimana.

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Opposition groups also rejected the polls after boycotting the vote, saying the prevailing conditions were not conducive for free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections.

Some have demanded a fresh poll conducted only after peace is restored and their concerns resolved through dialogue mediated by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. He was appointed by the East African Community to help Burundian groups resolve the country's crisis.

Nshimirimana said the administration has refused to heed to calls by the international community as well as the African Union and the East African Community to ensure there is peace and a resolution of the ongoing crisis before an election is held.

“Civil society released a communique where they stated that there has not been an election as such, since there was unconstitutional and illegal candidate who run alone,” said Nshimirimana.

“The election was held in a kind of an environment where security requirement were not met. There has not been the disarmament of the ruling party militia Imbonerakure [meaning those who see far], which is spreading fear in the country, and the opposition did not campaign to actually participate in the election,” he added.

Supporters of the ruling CNDD-FDD say the presidential election was legitimate, arguing it met constitutional requirements, despite the refusal of the opposition groups to participate in the vote. They maintained the election was credible since other opponents of the president participated in the poll. Nshimirimana disagreed.

“As civil society organizations, we have stated very clearly that the president of Burundi will be respected and be treated as our president up to the date of 26th August this year because he has been elected for his second and last term of office,” said Nshimirimana.

“Beyond that date, he will no longer be our president, he will just be an ordinary citizen and he does not deserve regards from the people. He knows that sovereignty belongs to the people and he cannot pretend to be the president of the people who did not appoint him to represent them.”

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Burundi elections: President Pierre Nkurunziza wins third term in poll denounced by opposition and international observers

NEWS STORY

Source: The Independent

25 July 2015 - Burundi's controversial president has won a third term in an election international observers have described as "tainted" by government intimidation and violence.

Pierre Nkurunziza won 70 per cent of the vote, according to provisional results from the country's electoral commission.

Opposition leader Agathon Rwaswa managed to collect 19 per cent of the vote despite boycotting the election, along with three other opposition figures running against the incumbent president.

The country has been marred by increasing levels of violence – and a mass exodus of terrified civilians – following Mr Nkurunziza's announcement earlier this year that he intended to seek a third term in office.

The move was immediately denounced as unconstitutional, breaking the two-term limit established by an agreement patching the nation together following the a destructive civil conflict which ended in 2005.

Thousands demonstrated in the capital of Bujumbura in the run-up to an aborted coup against the government. So far more than 100 people have reportedly died in sporadic flares of violence.

Mr Rwaswa described the results as a "joke," and declared the victor was that desired by the electoral commission and "not those expressed by the voters".

International observers have also denounced the election. The US State Department has said the election lacked credibility, with spokesperson John Kirby claiming the legitimacy of the process "has been tainted by the government's harassment of opposition and civil society members, closing down of media outlets and political space, and intimidation of voters".

The African Union (AU) did not send observers – the first time such an action has been taken against a member state.

Although 3.8 million Burundians were eligible to vote in the election, many declared their intentions to boycott.

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Despite this, the recent data from Burundi's electoral commission claims an overall turnout of 73 per cent – but notes that turnout was lowest in the capital, where much of the opposition to the president has focused.

Previous demonstrations in the run-up to the elections (both local and presidential) saw mass groups take to Bujumbura's streets and graphic images of burning tyres and agitated forces opposed to the government.

The central African country, which borders Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, has an ethnic mix of 85 per cent Huuti and minority Tutsi population. It has been embroiled in some form of violent conflict almost since it first gained independence in 1962.

The last conflict from 1993 to 2005 pitted the country along ethnic lines and cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

UGANDA

Uganda PM Promises 'Free, Democratic' Elections

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

25 July 2015 - Uganda's Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda is pledging that next year's elections will be free and democratic.

"The people of Uganda should expect a free, peaceful and democratic election that will give them their leaders for the president, parliament and district level and to the grass roots," he said.

Opposition and civil society groups have accused the government of using security forces to harass potential challengers to President Yoweri Museveni.

Former Prime Minister Patrick Amama Mbabazi and longtime opposition leader Kizza Besigye were both recently arrested ahead of planned meetings with their supporters. Opposition groups say the administration is narrowing the political space to ensure its continued stay in power.

But Rugunda disagreed.

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“There are laws that govern meetings around this time of elections, and all we are saying is that these laws should be respected by the candidates when they are consulting with the population,” Rugunda said.

The electoral commission recently released a voters list it compiled to allow eligible voters to verify their information on the register.

Opposition groups say the list should be scrapped for a fresh one, accusing the electoral body of lacking transparency in the process.

But Rugunda expressed confidence that the list would be credible.

“Without any doubt, this is going to be the best voters register ever produced in Uganda. It will have not only photographs, but other biometric parameters that can be used to ensure the voter is indeed the voter, and nobody is trying to cut out fraud and around elections. ... And we believe that with a good register, you have laid a good foundation for a free and fair election,” he said.

Rugunda, who was at the United Nations this week to commemorate the life, contribution and legacy of Nelson Mandela, called on Ugandans to be ready for the elections.

Museveni was recently appointed by regional leaders to help mediate peace talks between the government in Burundi and opposition groups following the political crisis in the East African country. The crisis has forced an estimated 170,000 Burundians to flee to neighboring countries.

“Uganda and the East African region and, I believe, the international community would like to see a peaceful resolution of some of the issues that have caused the tension in Burundi,” Rugunda said.

“[Museveni] has energetically stated his work and he is being assisted by the minister of defense of Uganda, and we believe that the peace process is essentially on course. We would like to see the Burundians resolve their issues, and sort out their house with support of the region and the international community.”

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Uganda: President Museveni releases rap song as he seeks new term after 30 years in power

NEWS STORY

Source: International Business Times

24 July 2015 - Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has released a rap song to promote his campaign in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election.

The 70-year-old leader has been in power since 1986. His song is entitled "Yengoma", which translates as "the drum", a symbol of power in Ugandan culture.

"That is his song, the voice is his," Museveni's press secretary Tamale Mirundi told AFP . "The president uses many forms to relay messages he considers important, music and proverbs being part of that."

In a similar move before the 2011 election, which he won, Museveni released the song "Mpenkoni", loosely meaning "give me a walking stick".

Museveni has already been given the green light to represent his National Resistance Movement (NRM) party in next year's election.

Controversy has arisen after former prime minister Amama Mbabazi and leader of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change party (FDC), Kizza Besigye, were arrested earlier in July, after announcing their candidacy.

Both politicians, who were released shortly after, are former allies of Museveni who now believe the president should step aside and give space to other potential leaders.

FDC said the fact that key elements who previously supported Museveni are now running against him gives a good chance to the opposition to win the election.

Changes to the constitution

The first presidential election since Museveni came to power was held in 1996. In 2001, after Museveni was elected for the second time, his allies started a campaign aiming to loosen presidential terms and allow the leader to run for a third term in the 2006 election.

The constitution was changed amid local and international outrage, with critics accusing the leader of seeking life presidency and persecuting political opponents. Prior to the amendment, Uganda's constitution allowed the president to stay in power only for two terms.

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The 2006 election, which Museveni won, was the first multi-party election after the government lifted a 19-year restriction on political activity, according to which those who run for candidacy had to do so as individuals and not as representatives of their parties.

According to Museveni, who imposed the restriction in 1986, this was aimed at preventing ethnic divisions. Critics, however, accused the leader of trying to curb party activity.

Why Uganda still needs Museveni for president

OPINION

Source: New Vision

By Nelson Ocheger

The recent decision by President Museveni to pick nomination forms for the chairmanship of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party and carry its flag in the 2016 general elections presents voters with yet another opportunity to re-elect the person who, given the current circumstances, is well placed to guarantee the safety of persons and property in Uganda.

24 July 2015 - General Museveni has, over the years, presided over the state that has restored peace and security. The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) has defeated all insurgent groups and squashed numerous rebellions in the country.

In disarming the Karamojong, the hitherto perennial cattle rustling has been tamed. This explains why, in the 2011 elections, the people of northern and eastern Uganda warmed up to the ruling party and enabled it win those polls. Uganda has played a pivotal role in the stabilisation of the Great Lakes Region.

Our country helped the Rwandese Patriotic Front stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The current peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, though still fragile, is a direct consequence of negotiations between the M23 rebels and Kinshasa which Kampala chaired.

Uganda brokered the Arusha Agreement that finally ended Burundi's deadly civil war and ushered in over 10 years of peace. And, as fate would have it, the East African Community (EAC) Third Extra-Ordinary Summit that sat recently in Dar-es-Salaam appointed President Museveni to bring the current Burundi protagonists to the negotiating table.

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Somalia is on the path to pacification. Venturing into the territory where the world's most powerful army — the US had been humiliated by the local militia. Uganda spearheaded the regional and international efforts to fight al-Shabaab.

Today, Somalia has a government, the terror machine is getting disseminated and the Somali people are returning to their country.

Uganda's hand was visible in South Sudan's struggle for independence. And, when leaders in Juba turned their guns on one another during the December 15, 2013 attempted military coup, UPDF intervened and forestalled the tribal massacres that would have descended on that country. The situation remains volatile, but the IGAD-led peace process is pushing for a political settlement.

The UPDF has been professionalised, the Police Force reformed and the intelligence agencies' capacities enhanced. President Museveni has provided the leadership that has made Uganda a success story in the fight against terror.

Little wonder that Kampala has been proposed to host the EAC and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Regional intelligence Centre. These success stories are a direct consequence of the constitutional powers vested in President Museveni's ability to decisively make use of the said powers, his personality and the moral authority he commands both inside and outside the country. These attributes remain very essential in an increasingly volatile global world.

As the country prepares for the 2016 elections, all evidence points to President Museveni's commitment to holding peaceful polls. But some contenders are laying the ground for a boycott. Yet others are preparing unsuspecting sections of the population to cause mayhem before, during and after the elections. And, in both camps is a group that has crafted an alliance that is not based on any ideology, principles or common belief, but founded for the sole purpose of causing regime change!

Uganda has painstakingly built its reputation as a peaceful and stable country.

This is not the time to subject the country to further political experiments for the sake of fulfilling individual and group ambitions.

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ANGOLA

Angolan Opposition Boycotts Vote over Transparency, China Loans

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

24 July 2015 - Opposition legislators have boycotted a vote in Angola's parliament in a rare show of dissent against one of Africa's most autocratic governments, accusing it of covering up details of lawmaking and new loan deals struck with China.

President Eduardo do Santos has held power for 36 years but discontent has grown over China's increasing economic dominance in Africa's No. 2 oil-exporting country while most Angolans remain impoverished, seeing little benefit from energy revenues.

The main opposition UNITA party, which waged a 27-year civil war with dos Santos's MPLA until 2002, and smaller opposition groups boycotted parliamentary debates and votes on several bills including an investment law on Wednesday.

The bill, meant to increase foreign investment in the southwest African nation, ended up being passed unopposed by MPLA lawmakers.

Few details of the law were made public by the government but it entailed reducing bureaucracy and creating special economic zones, free-trade zones and unspecified "investment incentives", according to the MPLA.

UNITA lawmakers called for full details of all bills to be made public and said parliamentary debates and votes should be televised on independent news channels, rather than the current system of edited excerpts in state-run media.

"Angolans do not have the opportunity to know what is happening in this house that is supposed to represent us all," UNITA MP Mihaela Webba told the national assembly.

The MPLA did not immediately comment on the need for greater transparency in parliament, but said the investment law was crucial to improving competition and increasing investment.

UNITA MPs also urged dos Santos to reveal details of the multi-billion-dollar loans that he agreed in Beijing last month and were billed as helping to prop up public finances hammered since global oil prices dropped by half last year.

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Many Angolans are angered by the increasing Chinese influence in what is sub-Saharan Africa's third largest economy.

They believe powerful politicians and Chinese companies gain the biggest benefit from opaque loan deals.

"How much did our president get from China? Nobody knows. How will we pay for it? Nobody knows," UNITA lawmaker Raul Danda told parliamentarians. "We asked our president to explain what he did in China but the boss does not talk."

But any serious anti-government movement is still seen as unlikely since Luanda has the best-funded army in sub-Saharan Africa and dissent is usually quelled quickly and ruthlessly.

China has lent Angola around \$20 billion since the civil war ended, according to Reuters estimates. Repayments are often paid with oil or funds go directly to Chinese construction firms that have built roads, hospitals, houses and railways across Angola.

This means dollars don't end up entering the real economy, increasing costs for ordinary Angolans. Millions still live on less than \$2 a day and World Bank studies rank the country 169 out of 175 countries in terms of income equality.

SOUTH SUDAN

Machar objects Uganda's inclusion in South Sudan atrocities panel

NEWS STORY

Source: New Vision

By Samuel Ouga

26 July 2015 - The South Sudanese rebel group SPLM/A-IO has strongly objected to the inclusion of Uganda in a committee constituted on a report on The African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan conflict. The African Union established a seven member committee with representatives coming from Algeria, Chad, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. The committee is to make recommendation and submit to the AU-PSC summit scheduled for the first week of August 2015. Dr. Riek Machar, in the statement, said; "The SPLM/SPLA strongly objects to the inclusion of Uganda in this Committee. Uganda has been a party to the conflict since the beginning (15th December 2013)." In the statement that New Vision has seen; SPLM/O accuses

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Uganda of committing crimes in support of the Juba regime and asked that Uganda's role be investigated. Dr. Riek Machar appealed to "the AU-PSC to expunge the republic of Uganda from the committee and substitute it with a neutral country. Dr. Machar also protested that SPLM/SPLA was not invited to the AU-PSC meeting that took place on Friday; 24, 2015 where the report of the African Union Commission of inquiry on South Sudan distributed and tabled. The SPLM/O accused the African Union for not serving them with a copy of the report yet the same was "served to the Government of South Sudan a week before the AU-PSC Summit..." Dr. Machar said SPLM/O expect to be officially served with a copy of the report and invited to the summit where the report will be discussed.

Background of the conflict In 15 December 2013, at the meeting of the National Liberation Council meeting at Nyakuron, opposition leaders Dr. Riek Machar, Pagan Amum and Rebecca Nyandeng voted to boycott the Sunday December 15, 2013 meeting of the National Liberation Council (NLC). President Salva Kiir ordered the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Major General Marial Ciennoung, commander of the Presidential Guard (The Tiger Battalion) to leave the meeting venue and return to the barracks to disarm troops. After disarming all ethnicities within the guard, Marial allegedly ordered that the Dinka members be re-armed. His deputy, from the Nuer ethnicity reportedly questioned the order and a fight ensued when surrounding officers saw the commotion. The Nuer soldiers also re-armed themselves. Fighting erupted between the Dinka elements of the Presidential Guard and the Nuer elements. President Salva Kiir has called it a coup attempt and announced that it had been put down the next day, but fighting again erupted on 16 December and spread beyond the capital, Juba. No official death toll has been kept. In November 2014, the International Crisis Group think-tank estimated that as many as 50,000 had died and the killing has continued unabated since, while hunger and disease have added even more to the toll. More than two million people have been forced to flee during the war, leaving behind whatever meagre possessions they had to be looted or ransacked by armed forces. Over 616,000 South Sudanese are refugees in neighbouring nations, with 480,000 of those having fled in the past year. Ethiopia hosts the majority, followed by Uganda, Sudan and Kenya. A further 1.6 million are refugees in their own country, living in squalid displacement camps, in swamps and forests, or in villages considered safe only because they are deep inside their own ethnic fiefdoms. Over 150,000 people are sheltering inside UN bases. **WAR CRIMES?** The war has been characterised by ethnic massacres and rape. Recent attacks have included castration, rape and tying children together before slitting their throats. Others were thrown into burning houses. In March 2015, a leaked draft version of the African Union Inquiry report stated that South Sudanese capital was 'ethnically cleansed' in December 2013. The leaked African Union document reported that a "killing spree" took place in Juba from 16-18 December

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that left alive few Nuer besides those who fled to UN compounds. The AU Commission of Inquiry is yet to release the report to the public, months following its completion.

South Sudanese rebels to consult in Pagak on IGAD-Plus peace proposal: spokesperson

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

26 July 2015 - South Sudan's armed opposition faction of the governing Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM-IO) under the leadership of former vice president, Riek Machar, will convene a consultative meeting in the first week of August on IGAD-Plus peace proposal to end the 19-month long civil war in the country, rebel leader's press secretary has said.

"Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of SPLM/SPLA, Comrade Dr Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, has called for a leadership consultative meeting on the peace process. This will convene at the General Headquarters in Pagak, South Sudan, in the first week of August," Machar's spokesperson, James Gatdet Dak, told Sudan Tribune on Sunday.

Dak said the opposition faction had received the latest copy of the IGAD-Plus proposal, adding it will be discussed in the leadership meeting with the aim to come up with a position to the document.

The meeting, he added, will include political and military leaderships including representatives of the movement from abroad.

He said the IGAD-Plus proposal had a lot to be desired so as to end the war with president Salva Kiir, saying it did not address many of the concerns earlier raised by the rebel group on issues of governance, security arrangements, reforms, accountability, compensation and reparation, power-sharing, among others.

The East African regional bloc, known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), last week unveiled its latest reviewed proposal for a compromise between the warring parties.

The expanded IGAD-Plus mediation which includes countries and international bodies beyond the African continent has also given the two warring parties a 17 August deadline to sign a final peace agreement.

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The compromise position is however similar to the previous IGAD proposal in March which the two parties rejected.

In the latest document the power sharing in the national executive would be 53% of ministerial positions for the government, 33% for the opposition faction of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM-IO), 7% for former detainees and 7% for other political parties.

In the oil-rich greater Upper Nile region, the SPLM-IO would have 53% in the three states of Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei, while the government would take 33% and 14% divided between former detainees and other political parties. No power sharing in the seven states of greater Bahr el Ghazal and greater Equatoria regions as government would take 100% in the two regions.

Also the top executive at the national level would include the incumbent president Kiir, first vice president to be named by the SPLM-IO and the incumbent vice president, James Wani Igga.

While the president shall be the executive head of state and chair the council of ministers, national defence council and national security council, the first vice president deputizes him and acts on his behalf in the event of absence.

The main task of the first vice president would be to initiate and implement reforms in the transitional government of national unity. There are other functions which are joint executive powers that need consultations between the president and the first vice president, and at times include the vice president in consultations.

The national legislative assembly would expand from the current 332 membership to 400 members. Members who rebelled from within the 332 MPs will be reinstated. SPLM-IO would appoint 50 additional new members to the parliament and former detainees plus other political parties would appoint 18. The Council of states would not be affected.

The speaker of the national parliament should also come from the states of greater Equatoria region.

On security arrangements, it proposed a period of 18 months of the 30-month long transitional period to complete integration process of the two rival armies.

The national capital, Juba, will be demilitarized, according to the IGAD-Plus proposal, and to be known as a Special Arrangement Area (SAA) with a radius of 25kms.

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Foreign forces from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), IGAD and African Union (AU) would take over the security of the capital until the end of the two and a half years of transitional period.

President Kiir would be allowed to have only 260 bodyguards in the capital while the would-be first vice president, Machar, would have 195 bodyguards in Juba.

An unidentified size of another force would be deployed to protect military barracks.

The parties have been served with the copy of the proposed peace agreement and are expected to consult with their respective constituencies about the document before resumption of the peace talks in mid-August.

Talks collapsed on 6 March when the two principal leaders could not agree on almost all the outstanding issues on governance, security arrangements, reforms, power sharing and accountability and justice, reparation and reconciliation.

Obama to meet with African leaders on South Sudan

NEWS STORY

Source: The Washington Post

By Juliet Eilperin

26 July 2015 - President Obama will convene a meeting Monday with the leaders of several African nations and the chairwoman of the African Union, senior administration officials said Sunday, to determine whether there is sufficient regional support for sanctions if the ongoing peace process in South Sudan breaks down.

The conflict in South Sudan, a brutal civil war that has divided a country created just four years ago, has become a major humanitarian crisis that threatens to destabilize the region. It has evolved into a quasi proxy war between Uganda, which backs the current government of President Salva Kiir, and Sudan, which is arming the rebels.

The presidents of Kenya and Uganda will attend the 90-minute session, officials said, along with the prime minister of Ethiopia, the chairwoman of A.U. and the Sudanese foreign minister. The meeting will also cover other topics such as combating terrorism and violent extremism in East Africa.

“We have a huge assistance relationship with South Sudan, and we have a history with South Sudan,” deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes told reporters Sunday. “And

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what I think we're going to be focused on is how can we not impose a solution from the United States but work with some of the other countries in the region who share our concerns -- Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya -- to try to find a way out of this impasse that is not going to be anything but more humanitarian suffering for the people of South Sudan."

The U.S. is also looking at how to bolster counterterrorism efforts in East Africa, as Islamist militants have continued to strike at civilian targets. On Sunday, a bomb blast killed at least 10 people at the Jazeera Palace Hotel in the Somali capital of Mogadishu; the terrorist group al-Shabab claimed credit for the attack.

In a statement, National Security Council spokesman Ned Price said, "This attack is yet another reminder of the unconscionable atrocities that terrorist groups continue to perpetrate against the people of Somalia."

"As the president underscored during his meetings with Kenyan President Kenyatta over the last two days—and as he will reiterate during his visit to Ethiopia and the African Union, two staunch supporters of the Federal Government of Somalia and the Somali people—the United States remains steadfast in our commitment to work with Somali authorities, our regional partners, and the broader international community to bring an end to acts of terrorism and combat violent extremism in Somalia," Price added.

African nations, led by Ethiopia, have been trying to broker a peace in South Sudan through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional body, and are almost ready to present a possible compromise to the warring parties. The two sides will have until Aug. 17 to respond to the proposal, and White House officials said they need to be prepared to exert significant pressure on them should they reject the offer.

Administration officials painted a pessimistic portrait of the warring factions, saying they had little reason to believe they would accept any sort of peace deal at this point despite the tremendous human toll their dispute has wrought. Forty percent of South Sudanese receive humanitarian assistance, and much of it comes from the United States.

An administration official, who asked for anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the talks, said a positive outcome is not a "likelihood." In that case, the official said, the United States would explore other options, which could include setting up a transitional government and then calling an election; the application of increased pressure on both sides through new sanctions; or an arms embargo.

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"I don't think anybody should have high expectations that this is going to yield a breakthrough," the official said. "The parties have shown themselves to be utterly indifferent to their country and their people, and that is a hard thing to rectify."

Speaking to reporters last week, White House national security adviser Susan E. Rice said she was "deeply disappointed" that the world's newest country had devolved into chaos over the past year and a half.

"Thus far, the sides have put their own personal power and wealth ahead of the interests of their people and have refused to accept numerous rational proposals for a peaceful resolution of the conflict," Rice said.

Neither South Sudanese government officials nor the rebels will be invited to the talks, officials said. "I think at this point our view is that both parties are part of the problem and this is not an opportunity for them to have a bunch of air time," said the administration official who asked for anonymity.

Princeton Lyman, a senior adviser to the U.S. Institute for Peace who served as the U.S. special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan from 2011 to 2013, said the fact that both Uganda and Sudan are directly involved in the conflict "makes it difficult . . . to really put pressure on the parties in South Sudan."

He noted that U.S. officials and others "have talked and talked and talked about imposing an arms embargo, but they've never reached that point, and if the Africans don't agree on an arms embargo the [U.N.] Security Council won't agree on an arms embargo."

On Sunday, the administration official said possible sanctions could include those targeting the assets and travel of individuals; U.S. sanctions; or international sanctions.

South Sudan mediators propose war crimes court

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

25 July 2015 - Negotiators have proposed establishing a court to try possible genocide and war crimes in South Sudan, in the latest power-sharing peace proposal hoped to end a 19-month civil war.

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Peace talks, led by the eight-nation East African IGAD bloc, have been taking place in Ethiopia almost as long as the war, resulting in at least seven failed agreements or ceasefires, all broken within days or even hours.

An IGAD draft "compromise agreement" proposes an independent hybrid court, set up in collaboration with the African Union and United Nations, able to try possible genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

US President Barack Obama, who travels to Ethiopia on Sunday, is expected to push peace efforts in South Sudan.

The 77-page IGAD draft deal, released Saturday, proposes offering rebels the post of first vice president, alongside another vice president, and offering the government 53 percent of national ministerial seats and the rebels 33 percent, with other parties making up the rest.

However, in the battleground states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity, the power-sharing ratio is reversed, with the rebels offered 53 percent of state minister jobs and the government 33 percent.

Civil war started in December 2013, when President Salva Kiir accused Riek Machar, who had been sacked as vice president, of attempting a coup.

It also proposes the setting up of a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate "human rights violations and abuses, breaches of the rule of law and excessive abuses of power."

All foreign forces -- notably Ugandan troops, who are backing Kiir -- would have to leave the country, while the capital Juba would be a demilitarised zone.

After the collapse of the last round of talks, mediators expanded involvement to create an "IGAD-plus" group.

It now also includes the United Nations, five more African Union nations from across the continent -- Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa -- as well as China and the "Troika", Britain, Norway and the United States.

The warring forces are due to renew talks on August 5, ahead of an August 17 deadline to sign a deal, the latest in a string of ultimatums.

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UN aid chief 'shocked' by suffering in South Sudan, calls for fighting to stop

NEWS STORY

Source: Radio Tamazuj

25 July 2015 - The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien today called on the warring parties in South Sudan to stop fighting, saying that civilians are suffering terribly as a result of the war.

He said this after a four-day mission to South Sudan where he met with aid workers, government officials and diplomats, besides also visiting displaced camps in Juba and Unity State.

"I am deeply shocked by what I have seen. Innocent civilians are bearing the brunt of this brutal war," stated the Emergency Relief Coordinator. "Families have endured horrendous atrocities - including killing, abduction, and the recruitment of children into armed groups. Women and girls have been beaten, raped and set on fire."

"Entire communities have lost their homes and their livelihoods. Many people are starving, living in swamps or in bushes, hiding in fear of their lives. This senseless cycle of violence must stop."

The UN humanitarian chief called on the leaders of the warring factions to take responsibility for their own actions and for those who act in their name; "I call on the leadership of South Sudan to listen to their people and lay down their arms, to stop the violence, reconcile their differences and commit to peace."

SUDAN

African Union mediator to visit Sudan next week

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

24 July 2015 - The former South African president and head of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Thabo Mbeki is expected in Khartoum next week to discuss the resumption of peace talks in Sudan.

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Following the failure of a meeting called by the AUHIP to discuss the preparatory measures and ways to hold the national dialogue process inside Sudan last March, the Sudanese government and the mediation traded accusations over the collapse of the meeting which had to gather the all the Sudanese political forces and civil society groups.

Mbeki will start a visit to Sudan next week, reactivate the stalled national dialogue, and the peace talks with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North (SPLM-N) on the Two Areas, said Ashorooq TV on Friday without further details.

At the time, different sources told Sudan Tribune that the chief mediator was infuriated by the refusal of the Sudanese government to participate in the pre-dialogue meeting which had to be held on 30-31 March in Addis Ababa.

AUHIP in a statement issued in April said Sudanese officials reassured them they would attend the two-day meeting as it was part of a roadmap adopted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AUPSC) and accepted by Khartoum.

Last September the AUPSC tasked Mbeki with the facilitation of the national dialogue initiative launched by president Omer al-Bashir in January 2014. Accordingly, he had also to organize two tracks of negotiations between government, the SPLM-N and Darfur rebel groups to end war and discuss security arrangements.

Initially Mbeki was mandated with the peace talks between the government and the SPLM-N to end the four-year conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.