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



MEDIA MONITORING

19 March 2015

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS

20 March 2015

I wish everyone around the world a very happy International Day of Happiness!

The pursuit of happiness is serious business.

Happiness for the entire human family is one of the main goals of the United Nations.

Peace, prosperity, lives of dignity for all – this is what we seek.

We want all men, women and children to enjoy all their human rights.

We want all countries to know the pleasure of peace.

We want people and planet alike to be blessed with sustainable development, and to be spared the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

Let us give thanks for what makes us happy.

And let us dedicate our efforts to filling our world with happiness.

Thank you.

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Tanzania's President visits Burundi

Source: Xinhua

Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete Wednesday evening started a two-day visit in Burundi where he is expected to meet some Burundian leaders and to participate in the session of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) that kicked off Tuesday in Bujumbura.

19 March 2015 - Upon arrival at Burundi's Bujumbura International Airport, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete was welcomed by his Burundian counterpart Pierre Nkurunziza, other senior Burundian officials and some EALA MPs.

A press release from the Office of the Burundian President said that Kikwete is scheduled to meet Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza Thursday, visit the Burundian Senate and attend the EALA session in the Burundian capital Bujumbura.

The two-week session of the EALA, the East African Community (EAC) legislative arm, will analyze several bills including the EAC customs management bill, the EAC competition bill, the EAC cross-border legal practice bill and the EAC electronic transaction bill.

The EALA is made up by MPs designated from the five EAC countries including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

RDC : deux responsables de la sécurité et deux policiers assassinés à Rutshuru

Source: VOA (L'information traitée dans cet article provient de l'AFP).

Les auteurs du meurtre, mardi, de ces quatre personnes ne sont pas connus, d'après le gouverneur qui précise qu'un chef du groupement, un responsable de la sécurité et deux policiers ont été abattus.

19 mars 2015 - Le chef du groupement de localités appelé "Jomba", le numéro deux local de l'Agence nationale de renseignement (ANR) et les deux policiers "ont été victimes d'une fusillade à l'entrée de l'Hôtel Rucaca", situé dans la ville de Bunagana, frontalière de l'Ouganda, indique un communiqué de la société civile de la province du Nord-Kivu, qui regroupe notamment des associations, ONG et syndicats.

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Le gouverneur provincial, Julien Paluku, a confirmé à l'AFP ce bilan. Il a ajouté que "l'identité (des tueurs) n'est pas connue mais (que) le responsable de l'hôtel où étaient logés les criminels est interpellé". "Nous cherchons à comprendre (ce qui s'est passé). C'est encore tôt pour tirer des conclusions", a-t-il souligné.

Pour sa part, la société civile a accusé de "présomés (rebelles) ex-M23 visiblement présents à l'hôtel".

Le Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) était une rébellion congolaise active dans le Rutshuru de mai 2012 à novembre 2013. Son fief principal était Bunagana, dans cette zone de Jomba.

Lors de la défaite du groupe armé, face à l'armée congolaise et aux Casques bleus, les combattants ont fui en Ouganda et au Rwanda, voisins de la RDC.

"Le chef de groupement venait d'être alerté la veille d'une éventuelle infiltration des éléments de l'ex-rébellion du M23 à l'hôtel Rucaca, en perspective d'un nouveau plan de déstabilisation du territoire de Rutshuru.

C'est pourquoi, en tant qu'autorité locale, Boniface Nduhirahe avait pris son collaborateur de l'ANR et les policiers pour aller s'imprégner de la situation", a affirmé la société civile.

Dernier avatar des rébellions à dominante tutsi soutenues par l'Ouganda et le Rwanda dans l'est de la RDC depuis la fin de la deuxième guerre du Congo (1998-2003), le M23 est né d'une mutinerie, en avril 2012, d'anciens rebelles ralliés à l'armée congolaise qui accusaient Kinshasa de ne pas respecter les clauses de l'accord ayant permis leur intégration militaire en 2009.

Limited progress made on implementation of DR Congo's Nairobi Declaration

Source: Xinhua

18 March 2015 - According to the report from the UN secretary general, the coordinator for the March 23 Movement (M23) Rene Abandi resigned on Jan. 12, 2015, accusing the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) government of violating the agreement.

"At the end of the stipulated time, 182 out of 1,678 ex-M23 fighters had been repatriated to DR Congo, just like the initial repatriation of the first group of 120 ex-fighters on Dec.

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16, 2014. We therefore still have over 1,100 M23 members at the Bihanga camp in Uganda,” the UN report added.

In terms of efforts made to accelerate repatriation to Rwanda of some 453 former fighters of M23, DR Congo government sent a team to Kigali between Feb. 2 to 4, to examine the modalities for the operation.

In a statement released on Feb. 3, the two governments reaffirmed their willingness to respect their international obligations to promote regional peace, security and cooperation as stipulated in the Nairobi Declaration.

The third meeting to evaluate the implementation of Nairobi Declaration was held in Kinshasa on Feb. 11, during which it was agreed that a multidisciplinary team will be sent to Uganda to accelerate and coordinate the repatriation of the former M23 fighters and their weapons.

Participants at the meeting equally reiterated the need to take measures stipulated in the Declaration to reinforce confidence among parties, including creation of commissions on expropriations and national reconciliation as well as freeing of former M23 fighters detained by the DR Congo government.

The DR Congo government and M23 rebels signed a peace agreement that was christened ‘Nairobi Declaration’ on Dec. 12, 2013 in the Kenyan capital. Enditem

Congo-Kinshasa: Ban Ki-moon recommande à la RDC de collaborer avec la MONUSCO pour traquer les FDLR

Source: Radio Okapi (Kinshasa)

17 mars 2015 - Dans son rapport publié lundi 16 mars sur l'action de la Monusco, Ban Ki-moon a recommandé à la RDC de coopérer avec la mission onusienne pour mener «des opérations militaires efficaces» contre les rebelles rwandais des FDLR.

Le secrétaire général des Nations unies, s'est dit aussi préoccupé par les nombreuses violations des droits de l'homme qui continuent d'être commises en RDC tant par les groupes armés que par des éléments des forces de sécurité nationale.

Sur le plan sécuritaire et humanitaire, Ban Ki-moon dit «craindre que l'absence de progrès dans la lutte contre les FDLR et le respect des engagements pris avec le M23 ne fragilise encore davantage les relations régionales.»

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Il engage vivement Kinshasa à collaborer étroitement avec la Monusco et sa brigade d'intervention pour planifier et exécuter «des opérations militaires efficaces contre les Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, en apportant l'attention voulue à la protection des civils.»

Le Secrétaire général de l'Onu se dit, par ailleurs, consterné par les atrocités que les rebelles ougandais des ADF continuent de commettre dans le Nord-Kivu. Il affirme sa préoccupation notamment sur des viols, arrestations arbitraires et actes de torture commis tant par les groupes armés que par les forces de sécurité nationale.

Le secrétaire général de l'Onu invite donc le gouvernement à accélérer les mesures prises en faveur de la protection des droits de l'homme et à coopérer avec la Monusco pour lutter contre l'impunité.

Ban Ki-moon a notamment cité ces cas:

«Les groupes armés ont également continué à recruter des enfants pour les utiliser dans les combats. La réaction disproportionnée du gouvernement de la République démocratique du Congo face aux manifestations qui ont eu lieu en janvier 2015 contre les modifications de la loi électorale a été une autre source d'inquiétude [...] Au moins 20 personnes ont été tuées et 46 autres blessées par la Police nationale civile et la Garde républicaine, tandis qu'environ 480 manifestants, dont des personnalités de l'opposition, ont été arrêtés et incarcérés après les marches de protestation»

Il a aussi déploré le blocage, du 20 janvier au 8 février 2015 par le gouvernement, de l'accès à Internet, aux médias sociaux et aux services de messages courts par téléphone.

Ban Ki-moon affirme que deux ans après l'adoption de l'Accord-cadre pour la paix, la sécurité et la coopération pour la RDC et la région des Grands Lacs, « la région vacille entre paix et instabilité cyclique ».

« La lenteur de la mise en œuvre des Déclarations de Nairobi, l'absence de progrès notables dans le désarmement des Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda et la méfiance persistante entre les signataires compromettent la réussite de l'Accord-cadre et font obstacle à sa mise en œuvre », a déclaré le secrétaire général de l'Onu qui « demande instamment aux signataires et aux garants de l'Accord-cadre de se pencher sur ces questions en priorité, avec l'aide de la communauté internationale. »

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Congo orders expulsion of four foreign activists

Source: Reuters World Service

By Aaron Ross

Kinshasa, 18 March 2015 - Democratic Republic of Congo on Wednesday ordered the immediate expulsion of four foreign pro-democracy activists detained at the weekend during a news conference and criticised the United States for supporting the event.

The group were among some 40 activists, musicians and journalists arrested in the capital on Sunday during the news conference. A U.S. diplomat was also briefly detained.

The incident has stoked tensions in the vast, historically unstable Central African country a year ahead of an election. President Joseph Kabila is legally barred from seeking a third term in 2016 although opponents accuse him of plotting to extend his rule.

Government spokesman Lambert Mende said the foreign activists including a Burkinabe and three Senegalese activists were part of a "subversive movement inspired from abroad". Authorities had found military uniforms in their luggage but Congo has dropped a criminal investigation into them, he added.

The foreign activists have organised protests in their home countries supporting presidential term limits ahead of elections.

The Burkinabe activist was a member of grassroots political group "Balai Citoyen", which played a leading role in toppling longterm President Blaise Compaore last year as he sought to extend his mandate.

CRITICISM OF U.S. ROLE

At least 40 people were killed in January in violent protests against a revision of Congo's electoral law that opponents said was meant to delay the presidential poll.

Kabila has not officially declared his intentions for the election, although the government denies he is deliberately seeking to extend his presidency. The United States has repeatedly urged Kabila to respect term limits and set a date for the election.

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Mende said a "black hand" had been active in Congolese politics this year and singled out the role of the U.S. embassy, which has acknowledged partially sponsoring Sunday's news conference.

"The U.S. embassy does not have the status to organise political events in Democratic Republic of Congo," Mende said.

The embassy declined to give an immediate response to the spokesman's comment, although it has previously said that representatives at the event were respected and non-partisan.

One Congolese journalist in Kinshasa was released on Tuesday but the remainder of the local activists remained in custody. Mende said their cases would be "closed very soon".

In the eastern city of Goma, about a dozen youth activists were released late Tuesday night after having been detained earlier in the day by intelligence agents while protesting the Kinshasa arrests, some of the released activists told Reuters.

(Reporting by Aaron Ross; Writing by Emma Farge; Editing by Daniel Flynn and Dominic Evans)

RDC : la situation macroéconomique est "stable", selon la MONUSCO

Source: Agence de presse Xinhua

18 mars 2015 - Les résultats macroéconomiques en République démocratique du Congo (RDC) demeurent " stables", avec un taut d'inflation inférieure à 2%, a indiqué la Mission de l'ONU pour la Stabilisation en RDC (MONUSCO) dans un rapport publié mardi à Kinshasa.

"Les moteurs de la croissance demeurent essentiellement l'accroissement de la production minière et, dans une certaine mesure, des gains de productivité dans le secteur agricole", souligne le rapport,

"Le principal risque de détérioration de la situation économique réside dans la diminution des entrées d'investissements directs étrangers, pour cause d'instabilité politique, et la baisse des cours du cuivre et du cobalt, qui représentent environ 98% des exportations de marchandises et 44% du PIB nominal.

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Le rapport rappelle que le gouvernement rd-congolais avait adopté en décembre dernier un budget de 9,07 milliards de dollars pour 2015, soit une hausse de 2% par rapport à celui de 2014.

Les relations entre la RDC et la Monusco évoquées au ministère des Affaires Etrangères

Source: ACP / MCN, via mediacongo.net

19 mars 2015 - Le ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la coopération internationale, Raymond Tshibanga a échangé mardi 17 mars à Kinshasa avec M. James Swan, ambassadeur des Etats Unis d'Amérique en RDC sur les relations entre la RDC et la Monusco.

Le diplomate américain a indiqué à l'issue de l'entretien qu'ils ont eu à parler de l'évolution de la Résolution du Conseil de sécurité relative à la configuration du mandat de la Monusco et de la traque des groupes armés en RDC, en prévision de la participation de la RDC en date du 19 mars 2015 à la session de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies à New York.

Les adieux du Nonce apostolique au ministre des Affaires étrangères

Par ailleurs, le ministre Raymond Tshibanga a reçu les adieux du Nonce apostolique, Mgr Adolphe Tito Yllana, au terme de son mandat en RDC. « J'ai accompli ma mission, j'ai appris beaucoup en RDC, les congolais m'ont appris comment être humain, je me sens identifié avec le peuple congolais et aujourd'hui je pars parce que le Saint Père m'a rappelé pour une autre mission », a souligné en substance le prélat qui a néanmoins regretté le fait de quitter la RDC sans avoir visité toutes les provinces ecclésiales du pays.

Renforcement de la coopération bilatérale entre la RDC et le Soudan du Sud

En outre, le ministre des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération internationale a également échangé le même-jour à Kinshasa avec Mme Béatrice Khamisa Wani Noah, nouvel ambassadeur de la République du Soudan du Sud, sur le renforcement de la coopération bilatérale entre la RDC et le Soudan du Sud.

La diplomate sud-soudanaise a indiqué, à l'issue de l'entretien, que les échanges avec le ministre des Affaires étrangères congolais ont porté sur le développement des relations entre les deux pays, avant de plaider pour la multiplication des visites mutuelles entre la RDC et le Soudan du Sud, pays partageant une longue frontière.

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Elle a enfin souhaité le soutien du ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération internationale tout au long de son mandat en RDC, pour le développement et la consolidation des relations de coopération entre Kinshasa et Juba.

Militia groups attack UN mission in eastern DR Congo

Source: Radio Okapi (DRC)

18 March 2015

Text of report by DR Congo's UN-sponsored Radio Okapi on 17 March

[Presenter] Local armed groups continue to operate in Rutshuru, eastern DR Congo. Local civil society organization's sources contacted on Tuesday 17 March in Rutshuru said a militia group, Mayi Mayi Charles, in coalition with Mayi Mayi Shetani, under the command of a certain Colonel Jado, former FARDC [DR Congo armed forces] officer, killed a civilian in Kisharo center in Binza.

Our sources on the ground also said that the same militia fighters attacked the Monusco's [United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo] intervention brigade, which retaliated. No damage has however been reported.

RD Congo : "Il faut savoir accepter la démocratie et partir" dit Moïse Katumbi

Source: France24

17 mars 2015 - Moïse Katumbi, membre du parti présidentiel et gouverneur du Katanga, a accordé une interview exclusive à RFI et France 24. L'homme d'affaires se livre sur son avenir politique, sur le redécoupage territorial en RDC et sur Joseph Kabila.

Moïse Katumbi ne s'était plus exprimé publiquement depuis des mois. Président du club de foot du Tout Puissant Mazembe - le "Paris-Saint Germain congolais"-, et membre du parti présidentiel, il est souvent présenté comme le principal rival de Joseph Kabila pour la présidentielle congolaise en 2016. Surtout depuis ses déclarations en décembre 2014, lorsqu'il avait utilisé la métaphore du "troisième pénalty" pour exclure l'idée d'une révision constitutionnelle qui aurait permis à Joseph Kabila de briguer un troisième mandat en 2016.

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Sur un troisième mandat de Kabila : "Le président ne s'est jamais déclaré comme candidat"

Pourtant, Katumbi affirme qu'il veut "prendre du repos, faire le tour du Congo" et botte en touche concernant ses ambitions politiques : "le président a un mandat, nous ne devons pas l'envier. Nous devons voir comment soutenir le président pour qu'il termine son mandat".

Pour Katumbi, pas de doute, "le président ne s'est jamais déclaré comme candidat". Il affirme par ailleurs "croire au PPRD (le Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie de Joseph Kabila) et n'avoir aucune intention de le quitter.

Sur le redécoupage des provinces : une pique à Joseph Kabila ?

La République démocratique du Congo a procédé à un redécoupage de ses provinces, passant de onze à vingt-six début janvier. Le Katanga, la province de Moïse Katumbi, a été divisée en quatre, provoquant une opposition de la société civile qui estime que les sensibilités sociales et politiques de la région ne sont pas prises en compte. "J'étais contre le découpage de la province du Katanga en quatre, affirme pour sa part Katumbi. Mais la loi a été promulguée. C'est la démocratie, j'ai dû l'accepter" avoue-t-il, estimant cependant que cette décision pourrait être difficile à financer car elle "n'était pas prévue dans le budget 2015".

Katumbi ne sera pas candidat au poste de gouverneur du Haut-Katanga en janvier 2016. Pour lui, ce redécoupage n'a pas pour but de l'exclure de la vie politique, contrairement à ce que beaucoup d'observateurs affirment. "Dans la vie, il faut savoir partir [...]. J'ai eu un mandat que j'ai respecté. Je suis démocrate [...] je dois donner l'exemple". Une déclaration à peine voilée que Joseph Kabila saura apprécier.

Congo: deux Belges pris à partie à Goma

Source: Belga via 7sur7 (<http://www.7sur7.be/>)

17 mars 2015

Une dizaine de militants congolais de l'organisation Lutte pour le changement (Lucha) ont été arrêtés mardi à Goma, dans l'est de la République démocratique du Congo, pour avoir protesté devant les locaux de l'Agence nationale de renseignement (ANR) qui détient un des leurs à Kinshasa, a-t-on appris auprès du mouvement et des autorités locales. Deux ressortissants belges ont également

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été pris à partie par les forces de l'ordre, selon un militant de Lucha qui a demandé l'anonymat.

"Il y a douze militants de Lucha qui viennent d'être arrêtés à l'ANR de manière très brutale. Ils sont allés là-bas (...) demander la libération immédiate et sans condition de Fred Bauma et des autres militants pro-démocratie" arrêtés dimanche à Kinshasa, a déclaré à l'AFP le militant.

"Droits fondamentaux"

"Ils demandaient aussi que le gouvernement garantisse la liberté des droits et libertés fondamentaux des citoyens congolais", a ajouté cette source, affirmant que Lucha avait "informé la mairie" qu'elle tiendrait mardi matin une "manifestation tout à fait pacifique". Julien Paluku, le gouverneur de la province du Nord-Kivu, dont Goma est la capitale, a pour sa part confirmé à l'AFP l'"interpellation d'une dizaine" de militants.

Deux Belges pris à partie

Selon la source de la Lucha, deux ressortissants belges, dont une "chercheuse" qui a été "blessée" puis "hospitalisée", ont été pris à partie par les forces de l'ordre. "Je peux confirmer que deux Belges à Goma étaient présents [lors du sit-in]. L'ambassade est au courant, on fait le suivi proche de toute cette affaire", a déclaré une source à l'ambassade de Belgique à Kinshasa, sans plus de commentaire.

UDPS : le parti propose une feuille de route de sortie de crise

Source: Agence d'Information d'Afrique centrale

Dans ce document, la formation politique insiste sur le dialogue comme seule voie pouvant permettre au pays de sortir de la situation dans laquelle il se trouve.

Par Lucien Dianzenza

17 mars 2015 - Le document signé le 14 mars par le président de l'Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, réitère sa proposition au pays et à la communauté internationale pour un règlement rapide et satisfaisant de la crise par le dialogue.

Pour l'UDPS, qui souligne que le contentieux électoral de 2011 se trouve être la cause essentielle de la crise politique actuelle en RDC, ce dialogue à tenir à Kinshasa devra mettre autour d'une table Étienne Tshisekedi et ses alliés (vingt personnes), pour le camp du changement, et Joseph Kabila ainsi que les siens (vingt personnes

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également), pour le statu quo. Alors que la modération devra être assurée par la communauté internationale représentée par l'envoyé spécial du secrétaire général des Nations unies en RDC et chef de la Monusco.

Le parti d'Étienne Tshisekedi soutient sa position par la résolution 2147 du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU qui a autorisé la Monusco à « promouvoir la consolidation de la paix et un dialogue politique transparent et sans exclusive entre toutes les parties prenantes congolaises en vue de favoriser la réconciliation et la démocratisation et encourager l'organisation des élections transparentes et crédibles conformément au cycle électoral et à la Constitution... ».

Pour l'UDPS, pendant ces dix jours dont trois seront réservés aux travaux de facilitation de la Monusco, ces deux délégations devront parler notamment du règlement du contentieux électoral de 2011 et de son corollaire qui est, selon ce parti, la crise de légitimité ainsi que de la définition d'un processus électoral consensuel.

Congolese Lessons for the Great Lakes

Source: ISN ETH Zurich

18 March 2015

Should the diplomatic efforts to prevent the DRC's Joseph Kabila from tightening his grip on power be extended to other Great Lakes countries? Cristina Barrios believes so. After all, the unconstitutional attempt to extend a president's mandate could also happen to them.

By Cristina Barrios for European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)

[This article was originally published by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) as Issue Brief No. 3 on 27 February 2015.]

As elections approach in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda and Rwanda, the entire Great Lakes region is bracing itself for a potential of a spike in conflict.

In the DRC, by far the biggest and most populous country, the official calendar for elections at all levels was published on 12 February. Yet the incumbent, President Joseph Kabila, appears to be entrenching himself and his regime in order to cling to power despite a constitutional limit which should see him leave office by December 2016. His three-pronged strategy consists of: tightening his control over the armed

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forces, the Forces Armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), shrinking the political space, and wrangling with the international community.

At a time when Western policy towards Africa is largely preoccupied with halting the expansion of Islamist terror groups, there is a feeling of déjà vu and perhaps intervention-fatigue. Nevertheless, as the region and its electoral processes reach the agendas of the UN Security Council, the African Union, the European Parliament and other EU institutions, international engagement is essential to monitor – and possibly tame – any outbreak of violence.

Controlling the army

The building up of a Congolese national army and police force which would secure the country and its population may be one of Kabila's goals – so long as these security institutions support his regime. When he came to power in 2001, following the assassination of his father by a bodyguard, Kabila saw the armed forces – still the remnants of Mobutu's army – as a threat. Now he believes he can turn them into an asset. Through a string of new appointments, judicial investigations, redrawn military regions and fresh operations, Kabila is clearly trying to seduce, as well as contain, certain members of the top brass.

Thanks to a variety of Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives, the FARDC is probably 'on its way' to becoming a regular army loyal to the state – but it is not there yet. For example, the EU mission, EUSEC DRC, has supported the drafting of laws and the creation of databases and biometric cards, and contributed to separating the payment system from the chain of command (a typical pillar of nepotism). EUSEC DRC has been able to make a difference through its focus on technical aspects and by establishing working relationships with Congolese partners and institutions for almost 10 years. Furthermore, by providing equipment and improving military schools, the mission has created the right working conditions for SSR projects to be implemented by other countries. It is in Kabila's own interest, however, to limit SSR, so that he can play the army to his advantage and limit its capabilities – in the event the armed forces decide to turn against him.

For now, the FARDC is not a state army but rather a politico-military space in which many, including the president, can play power games. Commanders and troops alike pledge allegiance to specific individuals and factions, whose authority often relies on local patronage, networks and resource exploitation. This situation is not unique to the DRC – and it is not new: it is reminiscent of the state of affairs under Mobutu and his Forces Armées Zaïroises whose mutinies and eventual disintegration caused him to lose power in a foreign-backed rebellion led by Laurent Kabila back in 1997. The 2003-

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2006 transition agreement foresaw the integration (financed by the international community) of warring armed groups into one FARDC.

But such ‘reintegration packages’ became a means to access power and funds while maintaining armed control of local spaces and troops. All this is problematic for SSR purposes. In 2009, for example, the well-organised (and Rwanda-backed) militia Congrès national pour la défense du peuple reintegrated into the FARDC very much on its own terms. It had a large say in determining amnesties, retained an independent chain of command, and ensured its deployment in areas rich in mineral resources. At 150,000 troops, however, the FARDC now needs to be consolidated – something which Kabila’s instrumentalisation of SSR is not helping.

Finally, the FARDC is but one of the actors on the Congolese stage: groups of rebels (sometimes FARDC defectors, or allies) and neighbouring countries often intervene and alter the state’s ‘monopoly of force’. MONUSCO – the large UN peacekeeping mission with an annual budget of \$1.4 billion and up to 20,000 soldiers on the ground – also plays an important role. Operating under Chapter VII, it is mandated to protect civilians and support peace consolidation efforts, and now boasts an Intervention Brigade specifically tasked to neutralise armed groups in eastern Congo. For his part, President Kabila has a Republican Guard of 12,000 men with trusted commanders – mostly from his region, Katanga – run from a private military cabinet nicknamed la maison militaire. These elite troops are now registered on a biometric database and have benefited from SSR, but they still answer directly to Kabila and not to the FARDC’s Chef d’Etat Major.

Shrinking the political space

President Kabila’s attempts to limit freedoms and prevent the mobilisation of civil society are clear. It is now impossible to access Facebook or Skype from Kinshasa, and internet access remains limited. The government also shut down social networks and stopped text-message services for mobile phones during a week of protests that the country witnessed in mid-January. These protests – against a bill that was perceived to allow for a potential delay to presidential elections— were especially heated in Goma, Bukavu and other cities with major universities such as Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani.

A prominent human rights activist in Goma and several journalists in the capital have disappeared in the last few months, and many more citizens are under surveillance. The Catholic Church, human rights activists, student movements and a variety of NGOs – collectively known as les forces vives of civil society – are currently warning of rising discontent across the country, notably in the provinces (Kinshasa, Equateur, Bas-Congo) which have historically voted against Kabila.

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The political space, too, has been reduced – but through co-option rather than repression. Throughout his two terms in power, Kabila has manoeuvred so as to split the opposition, buy-off opponents and rule comfortably with a presidential majority coalition under a ‘government of national unity’. The National Assembly houses representatives from almost 100 parties (including the weakened opposition party, the UDSP, with its 82 year-old leader Etienne Tshisekedi); none of which constitute a real political threat. Even the Senate has little credibility, since many of the representatives were co-opted by Kabila through bribes, and senators have already overstayed their tenure by three years following electoral delays.

However, it is uncertain whether Kabila will manage to stifle resistance much further. Some potential presidential candidates could pose a real challenge to the incumbent, including Vital Kamerhe (a former ally) and the Sakharov Prize winner Dr Denis Mukwege. In Katanga, Kabila’s traditional stronghold, tensions are rising over decentralisation plans (the resource-rich province is supposed to be divided into four smaller provinces) and power struggles continue between the governor, the vice-governor, and the regime. In fact, Katanga governor and businessman Moise Katumbi is Kabila’s most credible opponent nowadays. Alternatively, Kabila could choose a successor (maybe from his own family) in a scenario similar to that of Putin and Medvedev, but any new presidential candidate would need to gather their own momentum.

The recently disclosed electoral calendar foresees local and provincial elections in October 2015 and a presidential vote in November 2016. Most observers believe that Kabila will, for now, just play for time. The logistical challenges of this enormous country and the lack of political consensus over plans for decentralisation bode ill for the local and provincial polls. These elections may also spark additional localised conflicts on ethnic grounds. Raising funds to cover the electoral process – estimated at \$1.1 billion – will be no small task. In 2006, donors covered the entire budget, with the EU as the main contributor (also through its CSDP operation EUFOR Kinshasa). The 2011 vote suffered from poor organisation and was heavily criticised for its lack of transparency and questionable results. It may thus prove necessary to push for the presidential election to halt Kabila’s plan to prolong his mandate – and Washington has already expressed its readiness to contribute to this particular process. Unfortunately, this will mean that bottom-up democracy – through local elections — is once again overlooked in the name of stability.

Wrangling with the international community

On 15 February, President Kabila chastised an audience of 18 foreign ambassadors he had summoned in Kinshasa with the statement “the Congolese state is not destined to

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be co-managed together with a club of diplomats”. This rhetoric, hinting at neo-colonialism and emphasising non-interference, is hardly new and is fully in line with Kabila’s policy towards the international community ever since he was elected in 2006.

The DRC has repeatedly asked to be treated ‘as an adult’ at the UN Security Council and even blocked attempts to coordinate foreign assistance programmes by insisting on bilateral aid projects related to SSR. This antagonism exists despite the fact that the international community has supported Kabila since 2001 and generously provided about half of the DRC’s budget for years through development aid.

This latent animosity between Kabila and the UN has now transformed into open hostility, especially vis-à-vis the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative Martin Kobler and MONUSCO. Last October, the director of the UN Joint Human Rights Office, Scott Campbell, was officially declared persona non grata and expelled from the DRC. Although MONUSCO will soon see the arrival of new personnel in senior management, Kabila will no doubt try to isolate them as well.

More recently, a dispute has emerged over operations against the rebel group Forces démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in the country’s east. Although both MONUSCO and the Congolese government share the same goal of eliminating the group, the appointment of two generals by Kinshasa to head operations was rejected by the UN mission on the grounds that both are suspected of committing grave human rights abuses.

While this tussling with partners only erodes Kabila’s legitimacy further, the international community itself suffers from a credibility deficit in the DRC. MONUSCO has been the target of criticism for its shortcomings in providing security to civilians, and the Force Intervention Brigade, despite its robust mandate, has yet to become a game changer.

African partners also struggle to engage effectively with the DRC. The country is a member of the Economic Community of Central African States, but it does not interact much with Chad, Cameroon, or Gabon, the leading countries in this franco-phone institution. The Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (Burundi, Rwanda, and the DRC) cannot be easily used to deal with security issues. Although the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) is considered a promising trans-regional endeavour, the DRC remains peripheral in its structures. South Africa’s dominant role in SADC also poses a potential problem: this country is perceived in parts of the DRC as a new colonial power because of its political and economic clout, and its participation (together with Tanzania and Malawi) in MONUSCO’s Force Intervention Brigade is being carefully monitored by the countries of the Great Lakes.

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The African Union has never carried much weight in the DRC; at times it has sought to mediate between the country and the UN, with little success. Angola, however, is emerging as a crucial interlocutor – President Dos Santos is on good terms with Kabila, it has assisted the DRC on several occasions in the past (including during the 2011 elections), and it holds a seat in the UN Security Council for the period 2015-2017.

Instability without frontiers

The main security problem in the DRC is the forty-odd rebel groups which roam its eastern flank in the cross-border region with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. A telling example is the now defeated rebel group M-23, which, having been supported by Rwanda, is currently 'hosted' in Uganda, from where it is negotiating its return to the DRC.

Alliances are highly volatile, notably amongst Mayi Mayi groups and rebels and military officials from all four countries. One of the strongest groups active in the DRC is still the FDLR, a group of 1,500-2,000 men led by Rwandans who have kept the Hutu animosity towards the Tutsi alive since the 1994 genocide. The fight against the FDLR is difficult: combatants have mingled with civilians in pockets of Congolese territory for over two decades. Moreover, in the past, Congolese FARDC commanders have often colluded with the FDLR in order to exploit natural resources and resist Kigali's incursions.

In the Great Lakes region, however, it is not only the DRC's domestic troubles which are spilling across borders. The Republic of Congo recently expelled thousands of DRC citizens from Brazzaville (just across the Congo river from Kinshasa), igniting social, economic and political tensions. Conflict in the Central African Republic has led to thousands of refugees fleeing into the poverty-stricken northern DRC. South Sudan and Uganda both have porous borders with the DRC, and armed movements (including the Lord's Resistance Army and splinters of South-Sudanese rebel groups) and traffickers operate unhindered in this part of the country. Rwanda's concerns with its own security have often caused it to meddle in Congolese affairs – and while election-related instability in Burundi may not spread directly to Rwanda, it already affects South Kivu in the DRC.

Think regional, act regional

President Kabila is pursuing his plan, slowly but surely, to imbed his regime. He is seeking to minimise the chances that the military will turn against him; to stifle opposition from other parties and civil society; and to break free of donor pressure. As the elections approach, tensions will mount across the country, possibly leading to acts of violent repression by security forces. Other African leaders are also closely monitoring the situation in the DRC, and they will draw lessons accordingly.

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As was always the case, the security of the countries of the Great Lakes is a regional affair. However, the implementation of the regionally agreed 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is currently stalled. And MONUSCO's almost full redeployment to eastern Congo (where conflict is heaviest) may have created a vacuum in Kinshasa, the hub of political life.

Coordinated diplomatic initiatives by special envoys (including from the EU and the US) may be able to make a difference and contain the spread of violence across the region. Such diplomacy, combined with careful support for the process leading up to the presidential elections, may help – in the DRC and beyond. Indeed, targeting only Kabila and the DRC will not suffice when all Great Lakes countries face the potential problem of unconstitutional extensions of presidential mandates.

Did Western agents assassinate the UN Secretary General in 1961?: Four theories

Source: The Telegraph

By Philip Sherwell (New York) and David Lawler (Washington)

17 March 2015

As the UN reopens its investigation into the plane crash that killed Dag Hammarskjöld, its second secretary general, some are pointing fingers at the United States and Europe

The United Nations has ordered a new investigation into the mysterious 1961 African plane crash that claimed the life of its secretary general at a time of high international intrigue and intervention by outside powers as the post-colonial continent took shape.

The flight was carrying Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN's Swedish chief, on a high-stakes mission to negotiate with rebels in Katanga, a breakaway mineral-rich province of Congo that was backed by Belgian mercenaries and Western governments and business.

Pilot error was officially blamed after the DC6 plane carrying the UN's second secretary general crashed into the bush, killing all 16 onboard, in the then British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia).

But there were immediately competing theories that the plane had been shot down, possibly by American agents or European mercenaries, as Hammarskjöld was believed to be about to broker a deal opposed by Western interests.

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A commission of retired international judges in 2013 called for a new investigation after hearing "persuasive evidence" that the plane was shot down.

The UN has now announced that it is ordering a new review by an independent panel led Mohamed Othman, a Tanzanian jurist, and assisted by Kerryn Macaulay, an Australian aviation specialist, and Henrik Larsen, a Danish ballistics expert.

The team of experts is expected to travel to the crash scene. But for their mission to succeed, they will also need access to intelligence held by the US, Britain and other European states who have been urged to hand over the material.

More than five decades later, the new panel may be the last chance to determine what really happened to Mr. Hammarskjold's plane that night.

Theory #1: Pilot error

Evidence: The aircraft was flying overnight in central Africa at a low altitude. As John Mussell, the former Royal Rhodesian officer who coordinated the search for the plane, told the New York Times: "It doesn't matter how fatigued you are or how experienced you are. If you are in Africa and going into unfamiliar territory, it's not difficult to make a serious mistake." There were three major enquiries after the crash, two were inconclusive and a third, by the Rhodesian government, blamed pilot error.

Counterpoint: Even back in 1961, that conclusion sounded a bit too convenient given Hammarskjold's powerful foes. Former president Harry Truman's take? "He was on the point of getting something done when they killed him," said Truman. "Notice that I said 'when they killed him'."

Theory #2: The Americans shot it down

Possible motive: When turmoil over land and minerals engulfed Congo, Hammarskjold sent UN troops to support Patrice Lumumba, the prime minister. President John F Kennedy was known to regard Lumumba as a destabilising force and a possible Soviet ally.

Evidence: Two American intelligence officials at stationed at listening posts on the night of the crash claim to have heard the plane taken down. One of them says he heard radio transmissions in which a voice said: "The Americans shot down the UN plane." The other says he heard someone say: "It's the plane.... I've hit it. It's going down."

Theory # 3: Mercenaries took down the plane on behalf of European industrialists (and perhaps with British help)

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Motive: Hammarskjold did not just anger the Americans with his intervention in Congo. Even more incensed were European industrialists who stood to lose control of the country's mines.

Evidence: According to the Guardian, two top aides to Hammarskjold were convinced that mercenaries had been hired to take out the plane, and that the British government aided in the ensuing cover-up.

Theory #4: A Belgian pilot shot the plane down 'by accident'

Evidence: Susan Williams, a British academic who wrote an in-depth account of the crash, wrote that a "Belgian pilot called Beukels" claimed to have shot the plane down "by accident" after it had failed to divert to a different landing strip.

L'ambassadeur du Burundi à Berlin confiant avant les élections

Source: DW (<http://www.dw.de>)

Intimidations d'acteurs de la société civile et de l'opposition, milices Imbonerakure... L'ambassadeur burundais Edouard Bizimana pense que l'opposition tente, par ses accusations, de discréditer le parti au pouvoir.

18 mars 2015 - L'ambassadeur du Burundi à Berlin reconnaît que la tension est vive dans son pays, à quelques semaines des élections. Mais Edouard Bizimana estime que c'est l'opposition qui tente d'instrumentaliser le scrutin en attisant les craintes de la population. Selon le diplomate, les autorités se portent garantes de la sécurité de tous les citoyens du pays, et tout est mis en place pour garantir la tenue d'élections libres et transparentes.

Et ici, vous retrouverez l'interview avec le président de l'APRODH, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, qui, lui, craint le pire dans les semaines à venir, en cas de candidature du président sortant, Pierre Nkurunziza, à sa propre succession.

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His Holiness Pope Francis will visit the United Nations Headquarters on the morning of 25 September 2015.

Source: United Nations

New York, 18 March 2015 - The Secretary-General welcomes the visit of Pope Francis as an important part of a historic year in which the United Nations marks its 70th anniversary and in which Member States will take major decisions about sustainable development, climate change and the future peace and well-being of humankind.

During the visit, Pope Francis will address the United Nations General Assembly. His Holiness will also have bilateral meetings with the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly and will participate in a town hall gathering with United Nations staff.

The Secretary-General is confident that His Holiness Pope Francis's visit will inspire the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve human dignity for all through ensuring greater social justice, tolerance and understanding among all of the world's peoples.

Rwanda: ICGLR Is Just a Talking Shop

Source: The New Times (Rwanda)

By Mwene Kalinda

OPINION

17 mars 2015

Reference is made to the Editorial, "Regional camaraderie is not about endless meetings" (The New Times, March 15).

Who could quibble with that? Unfortunately the ICGLR hasn't been able to do anything regarding the long-standing deadly band of génocidaires-FDLR-that has turned eastern DR Congo into a desolate open sore of mass murder, pillage, insecurity and a potential source of instability for the region as a whole.

Yes, the UN Security Council, and especially its most powerful Western members, have refused to allow the principle of subsidiarity to apply-which would let the states that are most concerned with this issue to act.

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Instead they have preferred to manage the problem-completely ineffectually, almost certainly deliberately given the pro-FDLR forces they have mandated to eradicate their genocidal friends, rather than uprooting it completely.

Still, the ICGLR has not been able to do anything on the most critical matter of regional security before the organisation. As important as observing elections in member states is, failure to deal with the over-riding matter of regional security will leave citizens in the sub-region seeing the body as nothing else but a talking shop.

Post 2017 debate: After term removal what next?

Source: The New Times (Rwanda)

18 March 2015 - I have read about the ongoing debate on the issue of the Rwandan presidential term with a lot of interest but this would be the first time I put my thoughts about it on paper. This is simply because I didn't want to write in haste and be misinterpreted as a result...so here goes.

I've vacillated between the pro- and anti-term extension schools of thought, because both 'teams' make some good points.

On one hand those who wish to maintain the current constitutional arrangement, which mandates a two-term seven year presidential lifespan, argue that amending Article 101 of the Constitution (which reads 'The President of the Republic is elected for a term of seven years renewable only once. Under no circumstances shall a person hold the office of President of Republic for more than two terms') is a slap in the face of the idea of constitutionalism and what it stands for i.e. that a document is more powerful and sacred than an individual and EVEN public opinion.

I must add a note here: A president CAN enjoy another term if the Article 101 is amended in it's entirety. And to do so we'd need a referendum.

On the other hand, a view that has been espoused by men a lot more accomplished than me, namely Professor Manasseh Nshuti, Col. (retired) Joseph Karemera, Dr Pierre-Damien Habumuremyi, among others, is that a 'mere' piece of paper cannot overpower the will of the people, especially when they have been fortunate enough to have the kind of leadership that Rwanda was sorely lacking for the first three or so decades of self-rule. They argue that changing the captain with the ship still in stormy

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waters is a risk that the country can ill afford, especially with the kind of past it has had and the kind of progress that it is making currently.

My legal training pushes me towards the former view but my life as a Rwandan, who has lived in the country since 1994 and watched it grow, pushes me towards the latter.

I'm in a bit of a state. So instead of choosing a side, I would like to ask both sides a few questions whose answers will help me make up my mind.

To the anti-change brigade, I must ask, why do you believe that the issue of term limits is a no-go area? The document has been amended more than once and you didn't scream bloody murder. Secondly, if the constitution was agreed to and voted for by the Rwandan people, why aren't they allowed to change their minds? Is it because you believe that they don't know what is best for them?

To the pro-change team I ask, why do you believe Article 101 was initially added? What was the rationale for it? What has changed since 2003?

Term limit clauses (whether for mayors, governors, city council members and presidents) have historically been added to laws in order to remove the risk of a leader becoming so entrenched that they could ride roughshod over the will of those who initially put them in office.

I believe that is why we, Rwandans, agreed to Article 101. What I must ask the pro-change lobby is, if we remove the term limit clause, what guarantee will we have that a situation that Article 101 attempts to nip in the bud, will not occur? What guarantees can they give us that in 20, 30, 40 years from now, we won't have a leader that is more powerful than the will of the people?

We can assume that that will never happen, but history has shown that despotic leaders, who know how to pit competing groups against each other, can rule for eons despite their unpopularity. Nicolae Ceausescu and Mobutu Sese Seko are just two figures I can name.

The fact that we are enjoying the fruits of an extraordinary leadership is obvious. The fact that we deserve to enjoy this leadership is obvious as well (especially with the kind of luck we had post-independence). So making the debate about a single individual is a non-starter for me, because the answer is so black and white. Of course keeping President Kagame at the helm of the ship is good idea.

The main question is, if and when the people decide to amend Article 101, how do we do ensure that under no circumstance will a single person become more powerful than an entire society?

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Would we, for example, amend Article 101, remove term limits and add new clauses that take some powers away from the executive branch of government and therefore neuter it?

There are a lot more questions than answers right now. Ultimately, I would like to see more and more Rwandan youth join this debate, its more about them than anyone else for they are the future and they need to partake in conversations and decisions that will directly affect them and the next generation.

The author is an editor at The New Times.

S. Sudan border demarcation team in Khartoum for talks

Sudan Tribune (Paris)

Juba, 18 March 2015 - A border demarcation team from South Sudan is in neighbouring Sudan for technical discussions on the two nations can resolve their outstanding issues.

South Sudan's information minister, Michael Makuei on Monday told SSTV that they were on a three-day visit, during [which] both sides would agree on an agenda for next joint technical committee meeting.

Officials at South Sudan's embassy in Khartoum told Sudan Tribune the two sides started discussing the border issue.

In Juba, South Sudanese minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation said his country commended the visit and hope it would help the two sides to address some of the outstanding issues.

"We need to promote mutually beneficial cooperation and common development for our two countries. In order to bring about full recovery and healthy growth, it is essential that we stand together in times of difficulty, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, and promote common development", Barnaba Marial Benjamin said on Tuesday.

Marial said his ministry seeks to enhance mutual communication and coordination with his Sudanese counterpart to firmly safeguard and develop an open dialogue to achieve integration through openness and development through integration.

"We need to maintain a free, open, and unprejudiced multilateral trade system, oppose protectionism in all its forms, and guide various bilateral trade arrangements in the

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direction of open and inclusive development as opposed to mutually exclusive development,” he said.

“We also promoting mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, and mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs”, added the minister.

Marial also emphasised that the 2012 Cooperation Agreement advocates and encourages leaders of the two nations to embrace and promote the principle of the two viable states living side by side.

South Sudan seceded from Sudan in July 2011, but the relationship between the two nations remains tense. According to Enough Project, Sudan and South Sudan’s border conflict, which flared dramatically in the spring of 2012, has the potential of escalating further if steps are not taken toward peace and security between the two countries.

Observers, however, argue that negotiations between the two countries remain the best means for settling the disputed border, related security arrangements, outstanding financial and oil-related issues, and the final status of the contested Abyei region.

Natural Resources Conflicts in Africa

Source: Sudan Vision

19 March 2015

Evidence across the continent has shown that countries that are solely dependent on particular natural resources are more prone to conflict. Of critical importance is the weakness of key state structures in most African states. The first is the weakness of political and corporate governance. The neo-patrimonial nature of most rentier states readily lends itself to weak or poor corporate governance practices in relation to the regulation of the natural resource sector. Also relevant is the weakness of institutional and technical capacity. The major theatres of conflict coincidentally are countries that have poor administrative capacity to regulate the natural resource sector.

Closely related to the above is the nature of ownership rights in the continent.

Owing to the dysfunctional nature of political systems in many African countries, many private actors, including the private citizenry and ethnic groups who inhabit regions with natural resource deposits, often engage in conflict on the strength of their perceived ownership of such resources. This brings to light the centrality of property rights issues in natural resource politics.

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The issue of unresolved ownership is also linked to illegal exploitation of natural resources, as evidenced by the huge black-marketing of stolen crude in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta region, where citizens and ethnic minorities do not feel constrained in tapping resources found on their land, and which by implication belong to them as opposed to the Nigerian state.

The peculiarities of certain natural resources can also predispose them to conflict, linked to easy accessibility by non-state actors. These attributes include ease of discovery and extraction process, ease of transportation and less-technical ways of conversion (processing) into use.

Land is undoubtedly the most important natural resource in Africa. Every society in the continent sees land as a natural resource that is held in trust for future generations. Land is also the "abode" of most other natural resources.

Most of the conflicts over land can be linked to the inability of African countries to evolve a land tenure system that is acceptable to the population. The difficulties of harmonizing land tenure systems that are incompatible and for which the population have varying degrees of recognition and respect, remains a major challenge of many African countries.

Increasingly, agricultural resources are becoming linked to conflicts as they have been used to finance civil wars. Solid minerals have also been at the centre of controversies and conflicts in Africa. Next to solid minerals is oil, whose linkage with conflict has generated much interest and attention in Africa because of its high degree of profitability, the environmental consequences of its exploitation, the international nature of its politics and its role in the ethno-political and socioeconomic affairs of the endowed countries.

A close look at conflicts over natural resources in Africa will show a somewhat peculiar regional flavor both in the nature of the manifestations and the politics of their resolution. Of critical importance here is the Mano River Union, the Great Lakes region and the Gulf of Guinea, with particular emphasis on Nigeria's Niger Delta.

Main recommendations

A geographical and regional approach to dealing with illegal natural resource exploitation should be adopted. The geographical approach will help focus on the trans-border nature of most illegal exploitation as well as generate international and inter-state cooperation among African countries in improving border control.

The regional approach to dealing with illegal natural resource exploitation will include anchoring extant and new initiatives with existing regional organizations such as the

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Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union, among others.

Establish a group of Experts to undertake a comprehensive review of conflicts relating to natural resources governance in Africa.

Encourage greater research and advocacy work on natural resource governance by local civil society groups, with a view to putting the management of natural resources in the public domain.