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



MEDIA MONITORING

27 January 2015

Zimbabwe: UN Envoy Meets President Mugabe

Source: The Herald via AllAfrica.com

By Farirai Machivenyika

27 January 2015 - United Nations Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki Moon's Special Envoy on the Great Lakes Region Mr Said Djinnit yesterday met President Mugabe at State House to brief and seek advice on the security situation in the volatile region.

Mr Djinnit said he met the President in his capacity as Sadc chairperson.

"I came to meet the President as chairman of Sadc and brief him of my efforts I have been deploying since I took office last year and seek advice and support in the implementation of my mandate.

"I also took the opportunity to exchange views on the security situation in the Eastern Congo and the existence of a number of various armed groups there and call on the leaders in the region to deal decisively with the armed groups that have been committing violence against the people. They have been raping women, children and exploiting resources illegally," Mr Djinnit said.

He added that President Mugabe pledged to assist him in bringing lasting peace to the region.

He also called on leaders in the Great Lakes to ensure that their resources were used in a manner that benefited their citizens.

The peace deal that is expected to bring total peace in the Eastern Congo was signed by DRC, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South

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Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia in Ethiopia with the UN, AU and SADC acting as guarantors to the deal.

The mineral-rich Eastern DRC has been unstable for a long time with the DRC accusing Rwanda and Uganda of arming insurgents in the region.

Despite the signing of the peace deal, instability continues in the region.

Mr Djinnit said they had also discussed the socio-economic situation in the region and Zimbabwe in particular and commended the President on the gains made in the country's education sector.

"We also discussed some of the socio-economic developments in the region, including this nation and congratulated the President on developments in the country, especially in the education sector," he said.

U.N. warns Congo campaign against Rwandan rebels will take time

Source: Reuters

23 January 2015 - U.N. peacekeeping chief Herve Ladsous warned on Thursday that it would take time to defeat Rwandan rebels in Democratic Republic of Congo given the group lived among civilians and the United Nations wanted to avoid a repeat of a 2009 humanitarian crisis.

The U.N. force (MONUSCO) has finished preparatory operations ahead of a planned military offensive to dislodge the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a group at the heart of years of conflict in Central Africa's Great Lakes region.

Ladsous said he believed Congolese President Joseph Kabila would imminently sign off on the joint Congolese and MONUSCO plan to tackle the FDLR, which includes former soldiers and Hutu militiamen responsible for carrying out Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

The FDLR failed to meet a Jan. 2 deadline to surrender.

"We need to recognize that achieving tangible results against the FDLR, this will require both resources and time," Ladsous told the U.N. Security Council. "The nature of this armed group is that it's very dispersed, it's immersed within the local population, so it will take time."

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"We also need to do everything to avoid the repetition of what happened in 2009 when the FARDC (Congolese troops) had undertaken military operations against the FDLR which led to absolutely devastating humanitarian consequences," he said.

During a U.N.-backed offensive against the FDLR in 2009, Congolese soldiers were accused by rights groups of massacring hundreds of civilians and committing wide-ranging abuses. The Congolese army denied the scale of the alleged abuses.

"The protection of civilians remains MONUSCO's core mandated task," Ladsous said.

The U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned this month that tens of thousands of civilians are likely to be forced to flee their homes during the planned offensive against the FDLR.

Martin Kobler, head of the U.N. peacekeeping operation, told reporters after the Security Council briefing: "Our preparations are done, we are ready to go, our troops are pre-deployed and this is also the case for the FARDC."

He said there were an estimated 1,400 to 2,000 FDLR rebels and that 18 temporary assembly areas had been established for those who wanted to surrender.

Kabila told U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon this month his army is ready to help peacekeepers fight the FDLR.

L'offensive contre les FDLR se prépare

Source: VOA

Le Conseil de sécurité a autorisé l'opération début janvier. Elle sera menée par la Brigade d'intervention de la Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RDC (MONUSCO).

27 janvier 2015 - Une unité spécialisée de la Mission militaire de l'ONU en République démocratique du Congo (RDC) doit lancer cette semaine des opérations contre les Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), rappelle IRIN. L'offensive se déroulera en collaboration avec l'armée congolaise.

Le Conseil de sécurité a autorisé l'opération début janvier. Elle sera menée par la Brigade d'intervention de la Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RDC (MONUSCO).

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Les FDLR ont été créées par des anciens combattants des milices hutus Interahamwe et des ex-Forces armées rwandaises (FAR), qui sont responsables d'une grande partie des atrocités commises pendant le génocide rwandais de 1994. La milice, qui comptait jusqu'à 20 000 combattants rwandais à une époque, rassemble aujourd'hui au plus quelques milliers d'hommes. Les Hutus congolais sont particulièrement nombreux dans leurs rangs, rappelle IRIN.

En 2014, quelques FDLR se sont rendus dans le cadre du processus de démobilisation et sont retournés au Rwanda, mais la majorité aurait ignoré la date limite pour le désarmement, qui était fixée au 2 janvier 2015.

Soutien militaire de la Tanzanie contre les FDRL

Source: Pana

L'envoyé spécial de l'ONU pour les Grands lacs salue le soutien militaire de la Tanzanie contre les FDRL - L'envoyé spécial des Nations unies pour les Grands lacs, Said Djinnit, a rencontré le ministre tanzanien des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération internationale, Bernard Membe, avec qui il a fait le point de la situation politique et sécuritaire de la région, lors de sa visite dans le pays jeudi [22 janvier 2015]

24 janvier 2015 - Les deux dirigeants ont discuté des problèmes actuels de la région, particulièrement le besoin urgent de faire face aux groupes armés qui opèrent dans l'est de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), notamment les Forces alliées démocratiques (ADF) et les Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDRL).

Les deux hommes ont également exprimé leur impatience de voir se tenir en 2015 la conférence pour les investissements dans le secteur privé, soutenue par les 13 signataires du cadre de paix, de sécurité et de coopération (PSC), pour la RDC et toute la région, y compris la Tanzanie.

L'envoyé spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU et le ministre tanzanien des Affaires étrangères ont échangé sur la date d'expiration du 2 janvier 2015 qui avait été fixée aux FDRL pour leur désarmement et sur le manque de progrès suffisants noté dans la situation sécuritaire au niveau des Grands lacs.

Les résolutions du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies plaident pour des actions militaires de la part du gouvernement de la RDC et de la brigade d'intervention rapide de la Mission des Nations unies au Congo (MONUSCO) contre les FDRL et les autres

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groupes armés qui opèrent dans l'est de la RDC. Les décisions qui avaient été prises par les dirigeants de la région avaient accordé aux FDRL un délai de 6 mois qui devait expirer le 2 janvier 2015, afin de se rendre ou de faire face à des actions militaires.

'Je voudrais exprimer ma reconnaissance aux autorités tanzaniennes pour leurs efforts inlassables dans le but de ramener la paix dans la région. Je félicite en particulier le contingent tanzanien qui se trouve dans la Force d'intervention rapide (FIB) pour son rôle actif dans les récentes opérations contre les Forces alliées démocratiques (ADF) au niveau de la région de Béni, dans le but de mettre un terme aux actes de violence horribles perpétrés par des groupes armés dans la région', a déclaré M. Djinnit.

Rwanda: ICGLR Calls for Action against Terror Groups

Source: The New Times

By Athan Tashobya

25 January 2015 - The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has strongly condemned acts of terrorism in the region, calling for immediate joint action by member countries.

The resolution was made during the organisation's Fifth Ordinary Session that convened on January 20- 22 in Nairobi, Kenya.

ICGLR singled out Somali militant group, al Shabaab that recently committed a string of attacks in Kenya and the FDRL, remnants of perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi who continue to cause insecurity from their bases in eastern DR Congo.

"Their acts of terrorism in the Great Lakes Region have caused enormous loss of life and property. We express deep sympathy to the victims and their families," reads the declaration in part.

The session saw the 12-member deliberate on three key security challenges facing the region today. Top on the agenda was the political and security situation in Central African Republic, DR Congo and South Sudan.

Senate President Bernard Makuza who represented Rwanda, said the resolutions called for immediate action from the international community to end terror acts in the region.

"We in Rwanda are glad that members of ICGLR recognize that FDLR is not only a security threat to Rwanda but to the entire region as a whole. Military action is the only

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solution to end such terror groups," Makuza told Sunday Times by telephone from Nairobi.

A report presented by Burundi's Sylvestre Ntibantunganya on Tuesday detailed a number of crimes committed by FDLR against civilians in DR Congo, including rape and murder.

Makuza said Ntibantunganya's report, compiled by ICGLR members who visited DR Congo last year, was backed by the majority of representatives in the House.

FDLR was put on notice by ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to disarm by January 2 or face military, but the deadline has passed without any action.

Despite calls for military action against the terror group, the UN Mission in DR Congo (Monusco) and the Congolese government are still reluctant.

RD Congo : RFI inaudible à Kinshasa avant une manifestation annoncée de l'opposition

Source: AFP/RFI

27 janvier 2015 - Le signal de Radio France Internationale (RFI) était brouillé lundi matin à Kinshasa, selon des journalistes de l'AFP et plusieurs témoins, alors que l'UDPS, le grand parti de l'opposition congolaise, appelait à manifester le jour même dans toutes les villes du Congo.

Un fort grésillement empêchait d'entendre les émissions de la radio, très écoutée en République démocratique du Congo, tant sur sa fréquence de Kinshasa, que sur celle de Brazzaville, de l'autre côté du fleuve Congo. La radio française, très écoutée en RDC était en revanche captée normalement à Goma, à l'autre bout du pays.

Les autorités avaient coupé le signal de RFI mercredi sur toute l'étendue du territoire national après deux jours de violences meurtrières à Kinshasa déclenchées par un projet de loi électorale alors étudié au Parlement, dont une disposition ouvrait la voie à un report de la présidentielle de 2016 et donc à un maintien en fonctions du président Joseph Kabila au-delà du terme de son mandat.

M. Kabila est au pouvoir depuis 2001 et la Constitution lui interdit de se représenter à la prochaine présidentielle.

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A l'AFP qui lui demandait si les autorités avaient de nouveau coupé le signal de la radio, le ministre des Médias et porte-parole du gouvernement congolais, Lambert Mende, a répondu qu'il était "en voyage" et a renvoyé sur son collègue des Télécommunications, Thomas Luhaka, lequel a indiqué qu'il devait se renseigner.

Le camp du président congolais Joseph Kabila a joué l'apaisement dimanche en faisant adopter une nouvelle loi électorale expurgée de la disposition à l'origine de troubles ayant fait, selon les sources, 13 à 42 morts à Kinshasa et à Goma du 19 au 22 janvier.

Le nouveau texte soulève cependant des incertitudes pour l'avenir du processus électoral, et plusieurs diplomates ou analystes avertissent que le retour au calme risque d'être de courte durée.

L'Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), parti du vieil opposant Étienne Tshisekedi, a appelé à occuper la rue "pacifiquement" à partir de lundi et jusqu'à ce que le président Kabila quitte le pouvoir.

La journée devrait constituer un test de la capacité de mobilisation de ce parti, profondément divisé par des querelles entre dirigeants ou sur l'attitude à adopter vis-à-vis du régime de M. Kabila. L'absence de services internet mobile, de messagerie sms et des réseaux sociaux, toujours inaccessibles lundi pour le 7^e jour de suite dans le pays, devrait peser sur sa capacité à rassembler.

DR Congo authorities stifle anti-Kabila protest

Source: AFP World News

Kinshasa, 26 January 2015 - A call by the Congolese opposition for peaceful demonstrations to oust President Joseph Kabila went unheeded Monday as authorities maintained a crippling block on text messages and social networks used to rally demonstrators.

Only about 50 people gathered at the headquarters of veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UPDS) in the capital Kinshasa, despite the party calling for mass protests.

The small crowd dispersed shortly before midday (1100 GMT) when several jeeploads of police arrived at the scene after authorities warned no opposition demonstrations would be permitted, AFP correspondents said.

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The tropical city of 10 million people was mostly quiet Monday, a week after bloody protests over an electoral bill seen as enabling Kabila to hang onto power beyond the end of his mandate in 2016.

Following a Senate amendment, both house of parliament agreed Sunday to drop a controversial provision in the bill making any presidential poll contingent on a new voters' roll being drawn up after a census - a process that had been expected to take years.

But the final text of the legislation still leaves uncertainty over the timing of a series of elections in the troubled central African nation, including whether presidential polls will be held by the end of Kabila's second five-year term next year.

The bill sparked violent clashes between police and protesters in which 42 people were killed and dozens wounded, according to rights monitors.

The government denied that that demonstrators were killed by police, saying 11 looters were shot dead by private security guards and that a police officer was also killed.

Reacting to the violence, Tshisekedi, who has headed the opposition since the 1960-1997 regime of Mobutu Sese Seko, urged the Congolese people to take to the streets to oust Kabila's "dying regime".

Tshisekedi, 82, who is currently in Belgium for medical treatment, has accused Kabila's regime of flouting the constitution and engaging in acts of "provocation" that "risks installing a climate of generalised chaos."

On Monday, residents in Kinshasa were still barred from using mobile phones to send text messages or connect to the internet, part of a telecommunications clampdown imposed last week.

But life in the city had otherwise returned to normal, with schools reopened and the streets bustling with people and traffic.

The police and military presence around parliament -- focal point of last week's demonstrations -- had also been scaled back.

- 'Tighter and tighter' -

The constitution bans Kabila from seeking re-election after two five-year terms.

Yet the law passed on Sunday still raises thorny issues in the vast, mineral-rich country, whose eastern provinces have been rocked by years of militia violence.

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The state has less than two years to organise four sets of elections: local and provincial votes due this year, and then parliamentary polls and the presidential in 2016.

"The timetable is starting to get tighter and tighter," warned Thierry Vircoulon, central African project director for the International Crisis Group (ICG).

A diplomatic source predicted that, despite the concessions on the electoral bill, "hardliners in the regime will start again at the first chance they get" to try to keep Kabila in power.

Reception of Radio France Internationale (RFI) was scrambled Monday morning in Kinshasa.

Last week, the authorities suspended the French radio's broadcasts across DR Congo for 24 hours in the wake of Tshisekedi's call for demonstrations.

Congo protests expose weakness of Kabila's coalition

Source: Reuters

By Aaron Ross; Editing by Daniel Flynn and Pravin Char

Kinshasa, 26 January 2015 - Protests that blocked a reform which could have extended Congo President Joseph Kabila's rule have exposed deep rifts in his ruling coalition and galvanised opposition, increasing the chance of further unrest ahead of elections due next year.

Kabila took power in Democratic Republic of Congo in 2001 following the assassination of his father, and won disputed elections in 2006 and 2011 in Africa's largest copper producer. But he is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term.

A government bill to require a national census before the vote, which the opposition said would have delayed it by years, led to four days of street protests last week, in which rights groups said more than 40 people were killed by security forces.

With Western powers and the influential Catholic Church calling for the reform to be scrapped, legislators bowed to public pressure at the weekend and abandoned the census requirement in a dramatic climbdown.

With constitutional term limits looming for several presidents in the region, not least in neighbouring Congo Republic, the outcome of the crisis is being closely watched across the continent.

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Kabila has refused to comment on his intentions, saying it is a distraction from his political agenda.

For Philippe Biyoya, politics professor at the University of Kinshasa, the most significant outcome of the showdown was the gaping divisions exposed within the president's governing coalition.

Kabila's majority has been rocked in recent months by high-profile defections, including the popular governor of his home province, copper-rich Katanga, and Jean Claude Muyambo, head of a party which withdrew from Kabila's coalition and was arrested in Kinshasa last week as he helped organise demonstrations.

Several current members of coalition parties spoke out against the census provision following the protests. The Senate, which typically aligns with the government, voted unanimously to remove the measure after the unrest.

'ALMOST IRREPARABLE'

"The rifts are almost irreparable ... The damage is too great. They won't ever again be together," Biyoya said of the coalition of Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy and a number of smaller parties.

South African-based economic research group NKC said the blocking of the provision could signal the "start of scheming and backstabbing" among Kabila's allies who think that he will step down in 2016 and may seek to succeed him.

"And the public mood continues to simmer with rage against the president," it said. "We think there will be more trouble when the intentions of Mr Kabila and his possible successors become clearer."

The withdrawal of the census provision also marked a major triumph for opposition parties that have struggled to present a cohesive front against the government or mobilise large numbers in the streets. And it came without the presence of veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi who has been in Europe for health treatment since August.

"This is the first time that you've seen popular pressure in the streets of Kinshasa have a dramatic impact on policy," said Jason Stearns, a Congo analyst at the Rift Valley Institute.

"The question of Kabila's term limits is turning out to be something that a broad swathe of Congolese opinion can rally against regardless of political affiliation, regardless of ethnic belonging."

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Significantly, the opposition's calls for street demonstrations were given a huge boost by student protesters at the University of Kinshasa, where hundreds clashed on campus with police and members of the military's elite Republic Guard.

OPPOSITION CAUTIOUS

While students played a significant role in an uprising in Burkina Faso that toppled President Blaise Compaore in October when he tried to scrap constitutional term limits, last week marked the first major student protests against Kabila in years.

Opposition leaders, however, are wary of complacency, insisting that the president and his inner circle remain committed to clinging to power.

Opposition spokesmen say the law still contains several problematic provisions that might delay the election, including what they say is the ambiguous phrasing of parts that could be used to justify holding a census before any ballot. The final text of the law has not yet been made public.

They also question whether Congo has the financial and technical capacity to hold the full slate of elections, from local to national, due in the next 19 months.

At the 2006 and 2011 elections, the 22,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission played a significant role in helping to organise the ballot.

The election commission has yet to publish a calendar for 2016 elections despite repeated calls from the opposition and international donors to do so.

While the protests did reveal deep popular anger at Kabila and his government, Pascal Kambale, former Congo country director for the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, said it did little to point to who might be capable of leading the fragmented opposition to election victory.

"I don't see this as being massive support for the opposition. Not yet, from the perspective of 2016. I think it's more of a massive opposition to Kabila staying in power."

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Centrafrique : un membre du gouvernement enlevé à Bangui

Source: France inter

Le ministre centrafricain de la Jeunesse et des Sports, l'ex-chef rebelle Armel Ningatoloum Sayo, a été enlevé dimanche par des hommes armés dans la capitale.

25 janvier 2015 - Le ministre centrafricain de la Jeunesse et des Sports, l'ex-chef rebelle Armel Ningatoloum Sayo, a été enlevé dimanche par des hommes armés dans la capitale.

Alors que Claudia Priest, l'humanitaire française retenue cette semaine en otage en Centrafrique par des miliciens chrétiens anti-balaka, doit être rapatriée dimanche en France, c'est cette fois un ministre qui est victime d'un rapt.

Armel Ningatoloum Sayo ramenait en voiture sa femme et son frère de l'église lorsque quatre inconnus circulant à bord d'un taxi ont fait arrêter leur véhicule, ont tiré en l'air et contraint le ministre à descendre de voiture. Puis ils se sont enfuis avec lui, en direction de "Boy Rabe", selon son épouse, un fief des milices chrétiennes "anti-balaka".

C'est la première fois qu'un membre du gouvernement est kidnappé en Centrafrique.

Le rapt n'a pas été revendiqué. Mais depuis quelques jours, les enlèvements se multiplient à Bangui. Outre Claudia Priest et un Centrafricain travaillant pour la même ONG, une employée expatriée de la Minusca (Mission des Nations unies en Centrafrique) a été kidnappée mardi et libérée après avoir été retenue quelques heures par des anti-balaka.

Avant d'être ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Armel Sayo était le chef de la rébellion Mouvement Révolution Justice basée dans le nord-ouest du pays, un groupe qui sans être l'allié des anti-balaka, se montrait particulièrement hostile envers la Seleka. Armel Sayo est entré au gouvernement du Premier ministre Mahamat Kamoun, à la suite de la signature de l'accord de cessation des hostilités du 23 juillet 2014 à Brazzaville, au Congo.

La République centrafricaine est déchirée par les affrontements entre anciens rebelles musulmans de la Seleka et miliciens anti-balaka

Les milices anti-balaka, principalement chrétiennes, se sont formées pour lutter contre les rebelles, essentiellement musulmans, de la coalition Séléka qui avait pris le pouvoir en Centrafrique en mars 2013 avant d'en être chassée en janvier 2014. Les deux

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camps sont accusés d'avoir commis de graves exactions qui ont fait des milliers de morts et près d'un million de déplacés.

La France a décidé de retirer progressivement ses troupes de la République centrafricaine, où les soldats de la Minusca (Mission des Nations unies en République centrafricaine) sont en cours de déploiement.

La MISAC condamne fermement l'enlèvement de trois ministres en République centrafricaine

Source: UA via Alwihda Info

Bangui, 25 janvier 2015 - Le Représentant spécial de la Présidente de la Commission de l'Union africaine (UA) et Chef de la Mission de l'UA pour la Centrafrique et l'Afrique centrale (MISAC), le Général Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko, condamne fermement l'enlèvement, ce jour, 25 janvier 2015, à Bangui, du Ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports de la République centrafricaine (RCA), Armel Sayo, par des hommes armés non encore identifiés, ainsi que celui du Ministre des Finances et du Budget, Assane Abdalla Kadre, et du Ministre de l'Education nationale, Eloi Anguimate, respectivement, à Ndele et Kaga Bandoro, par les ex-Seleka.

Le Représentant spécial souligne que ces enlèvements, érigés en mode d'expression de revendications et de mécontentements divers, sont inacceptables et en totale violation de l'Accord de Cessations des Hostilités, dont certains groupes politico-militaires sont signataires. Il exige la libération immédiate et inconditionnelle des membres concernés du Gouvernement centrafricain, ainsi que celle d'autres otages se trouvant entre les mains des groupes armés. Il demande aux dirigeants des groupes armés de s'engager résolument sur la voie du dialogue avec le Gouvernement de Transition et de s'inscrire dans une dynamique politique permettant à tous les acteurs concernés de participer au Forum de Bangui.

Le Représentant spécial met en garde les commanditaires et les auteurs de ces enlèvements, et souligne qu'ils répondront de leurs actes.

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Kenya: Speaker Ethuro Assumes Office as President of FP-ICGLR

Source: AllAfrica.com

Nairobi, 27 January 2015 - Speaker of the Senate Ekwee Ethuro was Thursday evening appointed as sitting President of the Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR).

Right Honourable Pie Ntavyohanyuma - the outgoing President of FP-ICGLR and President (Speaker) of the National Assembly of Burundi - handed over the mantle to Ekwee Ethuro who was appointed through consensus by Member States' parliaments as President-elect during the 4th Ordinary Session of the FP-ICGLR held in 2013 in Bujumbura.

"I take this opportunity to congratulate the Right Honourable Ekwee Ethuro, Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Kenya as he takes up the leadership of this forum. I am confident that he will steer us toward our ambitious goals," Ntavyohanyuma stated.

He also lauded the Government of Kenya and particularly the Senate for hosting the fifth Ordinary Session and the hospitality extended.

During his one year term, Ethuro's overall duty shall be the management of the Forum and shall be the political and diplomatic representative of the Forum. As President he will also be expected to chair the Plenary Assembly of the FP-ICGLR which is the Supreme Organ of the Forum.

The Plenary Assembly has the authority to deliberate on all matters relating to the powers and duties of the Forum.

"I am greatly humbled by the honour of being elected the President of the PF-ICGLR at this Fifth Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly of the Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (PF-ICGR)," said Ethuro as he delivered his acceptance speech.

"It is such a great honour for me as a person, the Parliament of the Republic of Kenya and indeed our beloved country, Kenya." While acknowledging that spearheading the forum isn't a light responsibility, he promised member states to undertake his new responsibilities with the commitment and dedication it deserves.

The responsibility bestowed upon Ethuro comes at a time when the region is faced with a myriad of challenges related to security and youth unemployment.

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During the Plenary Assembly, the delegates took time to strongly condemn acts of terrorism in the Great Lakes Region in general and in particular those committed by group Al Shabaab in the Republic of Kenya.

The Assembly was cognizant that the terror group has caused enormous loss of life and property and expressed deep sympathy to the victims and their families, the people and the Kenyan Government.

As President of the FP-ICGLR he took time to congratulate the Parliament of the Republic of Angola which was admitted as a full member of the FP-ICGLR.

"I come to the helm of FP-ICGLR when the membership has expanded. In this respect, I take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome on board the Parliament of Angola which has been admitted to membership of the FP-ICGLR at this Forum held in Nairobi."

Kenyan delegates who attended the forum included Senators: Beatrice Elachi (Majority Whip), Beth Mugo (Nominated), Mike Sonko Mbuvi (Nairobi), Peter Mositet (Kajiado), Prof. John Lonyangopuo (West Pokot), Zipporah Kittony (Nominated), Naisula Lesuuda (Nominated), Dr Agnes Zani (Nominated).

The FP-ICGLR is an inter-parliamentary organization bringing together 12 African Parliaments in the Great Lakes Region consisting of Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The FP-ICGLR is committed to bringing a significant parliamentary contribution to the implementation of the Pact on Stability, Security and Development in the Great Lakes region that was adopted by Member States in 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya.

From 2010 and 2013 The FP-ICGLR had held four Ordinary Sessions of the Plenary Assembly, respectively, in Khartoum, Kampala, Kinshasa and Bujumbura.

The fifth forum of the FP-ICGLR was hosted by the Senate of Kenya from 20th to 22nd January, 2015.

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Uganda LRA rebel leader Ongwen faces ICC judges

Source: AFP via News24.com

26 January 2015 - The Hague - Notorious former Lord's Resistance Army commander Dominic Ongwen faces International Criminal Court judges for the first time on Monday, charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Once known as the "White Ant" for his brutal command within the Ugandan rebel army, led by fellow ICC fugitive Joseph Kony, Ongwen is to make his first appearance in The Hague at 13:00 GMT.

He was transferred to the ICC last week following his surrender to US Special Forces in the Central African Republic earlier this month and is the first Ugandan rebel to face ICC judges.

The former child soldier-turned-warlord is one of the main leaders of the LRA, which is accused of killing more than 100 000 people and abducting at least 60 000 children in a bloody rebellion that started in 1987.

Identity and language

Ongwen has been wanted for crimes for almost a decade by the ICC and the United States had offered a \$5m reward for his capture.

During the initial hearing presiding judge Ekaterina Trendafilova will ask Ongwen to confirm his identity and decide which language will be used in the proceedings.

He will also be informed of the charges against him.

Ongwen was a senior aide to LRA leader and warlord Kony, who is still at large and being pursued by regional troops and US Special Forces.

Major blow to LRA

Ongwen's surrender dealt a major blow to the LRA's three-decade campaign across several central African nations. He has been sought by the ICC to face charges that also include murder, enslavement, inhumane acts and directing attacks against civilians.

His capture has been widely hailed by rights groups and the ICC's chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who said it took the world "one step closer to ending the LRA's reign of terror" in the restive African Great Lakes region.

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Ongwen was abducted by the LRA at the age of 10 while on his way to school and turned into a child soldier, before rising through the ranks to become one of its top commanders.

Rights groups have pointed out that the fact Ongwen was initially himself a victim may be a mitigating factor, should Ongwen be found guilty and sentenced.

IMF boss to visit Rwanda

Source: Rwanda Eye

26 January 2015 - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has confirmed that its Managing Director, Ms. Christine Lagarde, will visit Rwanda from Monday, January 26 to Thursday, January 29, 2015.

The IMF Boss will proceed to Senegal where she will continue her Africa visit till Saturday, January 31.

The core agenda of the visit is to meet with policymakers and other representatives of society in each country, thus strengthening the IMF's relationship with both countries.

In her capacity as Managing Director, she has previously visited other sub-Saharan countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, and South Africa. The organization continues to establish significant relationships with several African governments, companies and financial bodies aimed at providing funds for various development projects in the region.

"My visit will provide an opportunity to strengthen the IMF partnership with Rwanda, a country that has seen success in building strong, stable, and inclusive economies in the world's second fastest-growing region. Rwanda over the past 20 years has emerged as an African economic success story, demonstrating real progress in achieving high levels of growth and poverty reduction," Ms. Lagarde hinted.

She is expected to meet senior government officials, business leaders, parliamentarians, prominent women, and representatives of the business communities and civil society. A special highlight of this trip will be her meeting with Rwandan President Paul Kagame in Kigali

As Rwanda continues to position as a preferred investment destination in the East African region, it will also require the sort of deep pockets that IMF-like institutions possess. Urban infrastructure development will likely be a key goal for the freest East

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African economy, hence, this visit and the strengthened partnership it will bring will be very welcome.

Davos hails Rwanda's pursuit of gender equality

Source: AFP

24 January 2015 - Rwanda was held up Saturday as a beacon for gender equality as the business and political elite at the Davos forum underlined the importance of achieving parity in ending poverty.

The central African country, which two decades ago was struggling to recover from genocide that claimed 800,000 lives, became the first country in 2008 to have a parliament dominated by women.

Today, female lawmakers make up 64 percent of parliament, outperforming the world average of one in five.

"In 20 years, so much can happen in a country because of leadership," said UN Women head Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

"The culture in Rwanda is not different from other parts of Africa. But people take the cue from the leader.

"If you send the right message, people do change," said Mlambo-Ngcuka, former deputy president of South Africa.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame said his government made a conscious decision to push for the participation of women in the country's reconstruction following genocide.

"During the process of liberation and cleaning up the mess after the genocide, the first thing to come to our minds is how to bring everyone in the country to participate in the kind of change we want in the country.

"There you have to bring in women as well... we thought that in our policies and politics we need to involve everybody," he said.

A quota of 30 percent was put in place for parliament that eventually led to women dominating.

Highlighting how having females in official positions has helped, Kagame cited the justice system where women are present in all levels of law enforcement.

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"If a case (of violence against a girl or a woman) happens, it is reported in real time, and the combination of police and attorney deals with the case and prosecute in a very short time," he said.

- 'It's just fair' -

Philanthropist Melinda Gates drew the link between the role played by women in slashing child mortality in Rwanda.

"President Paul Kagame's country has the steepest decline in childhood deaths in the world," she told the Davos forum.

Rwanda's child-mortality rate more than halved in the five years between 2005 and 2010.

Gates added that there is also a strong economic argument in pushing for females to have the same rights as men.

"If you invest in a girl or women, you're investing in everyone else.

"Because she's the centre of the family, she's the nurse, ... for every dollar she gets, she ploughs 99 percent back into the family," said Gates.

"So we know it's fundamentally important to make sure her health is there. Make sure she has the decision-making voice in the family and that she gets an education.

"If she's educated, she's twice as likely to educate her daughter," said Gates.

Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg however questioned the necessity of bringing out an economic argument in the quest for gender parity.

"We always make an argument about why we should invest in women. I think it's very easy -- it's just fair. It's a human right.

"It's more provocative that we're not doing it than we're doing it."

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Rwanda: arrestation de trois maires soupçonnés de malversations

Par RFI

Ruben Sprich (Reuters)

25 janvier 2015 - Trois maires d'importantes agglomérations rwandaises et certains de leurs adjoints ont été arrêtés coup sur coup. Pour l'heure, ces responsables de Rusizi, Karongi et Nyamasheke sont suspectés de faux et usage de faux.

Certains officiels ont avoué aux enquêteurs avoir gonflé le nombre d'adhérents à la mutuelle de santé afin d'obtenir de meilleurs résultats en matière d'Imihigo, ces contrats de performance signés chaque année avec le président de la République qui fixe des objectifs précis à atteindre.

Ces Imihigo seraient d'ailleurs à la source de trois autres démissions de maires. Ces derniers n'ont pas réussi à justifier deux années consécutives de résultats médiocres, a expliqué à RFI le porte-parole de l'administration locale, assurant qu'ils avaient démissionné de leur plein gré. « Notre pays doit se développer, donc les élus doivent accepter de travailler sous pression », a-t-il défendu, réfutant toute limite ou échec du système des Imihigo.

Reste que la semaine dernière, le président rwandais Paul Kagame, semblant aller plus loin que le parquet, a mis en garde les dirigeants qui « satisfont les intérêts personnels en utilisant les deniers publics. » Il a ajouté : « que d'autres erreurs de dirigeants locaux pourraient être mises au jour. »

Burundi : la société civile lance une campagne contre le troisième mandat de Pierre Nkurunziza

Source: Agence de presse Xinhua

27 janvier 2015 - Les organisations de la société civile ont lancé lundi une campagne citoyenne "Halte au troisième mandat!" contre le troisième mandat du président actuel, Pierre Nkurunziza, au pouvoir depuis 2005.

"Les académiciens, religieux, journalistes, juristes, analystes politiques, artistes musiciens, les jeunes du Burundi sont appelés à dire 'Halte au troisième mandat, engageons-nous pour tourner page'", a déclaré au cours d'une conférence de presse Vital Nshimirimana, président du Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile (FORSC), une des organisations qui ont lancé ladite campagne.

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Ces organisations signataires ont également appelé la communauté internationale, particulièrement les parrains de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la Paix au Burundi, à savoir les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, la France, le Rwanda, l'Ouganda, le Kenya, la Tanzanie et l'Afrique du Sud, à ne pas soutenir la violation de l'Accord d'Arusha pour assouvir les intérêts d'un parti politique et d'un seul homme.

Pour ces organisations, "l'Accord d'Arusha (...) a limité les mandats présidentiels à deux, chaque mandat ne devant pas dépasser 5 ans". Elles indiquent que l'esprit de l'Accord d'Arusha a été entièrement fondu et traduit dans la Constitution dont les articles 96, 103 et 302 montrent à suffisance que le Président actuel de la République du Burundi ne peut exercer plus de deux mandats.

Le Président Pierre Nkurunziza est à la tête du pays depuis 2005, et a été réélu en 2010 au suffrage universel direct.

"Le Président de la République a déjà prêté serment deux fois, le peuple burundais ne peut en aucun cas accepter de recevoir un troisième mandat !", a martelé Vital Nshimirimana.

De son côté, le Président de la République, Pierre Nkurunziza, n'a jamais donné sa position et s'est toujours contenté de dire que c'est son parti qui va désigner le candidat aux présidentielles.

Les élections générales sont prévues entre mai et septembre 2015, et les présidentielles sont programmées au 26 juin 2015.

Affaire de la RPA: que veut le pouvoir burundais?

Par RFI

25 janvier 2015 - Au Burundi, le ministère public est enfin sorti de son silence six jours après l'arrestation du directeur de la Radio publique africaine (RPA), la plus populaire des radios burundaises, accusée par le pouvoir de rouler pour l'opposition. Bob Rugurika est poursuivi désormais pour quatre chefs d'inculpation, « manquement à la solidarité nationale », « violation du secret de l'instruction », « recel de criminel » et surtout « complicité d'assassinat », le procureur général lui reproche d'« avoir à sa disposition » et de « protéger » un homme, qui a reconnu sur la RPA appartenir à un groupe recruté par de hauts responsables des services secrets burundais pour assassiner trois religieuses italiennes dans un quartier de Bujumbura, il y a quatre mois. Le ministère public burundais pose donc ses conditions pour la libération du directeur de la RPA dans une déclaration lue devant la presse hier, une libération qui est

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réclamée de toutes parts. Inacceptable pour sa défense qui estime qu'il a donné tous les éléments à sa disposition.

Si on en croit cette déclaration, le procureur général de la République, Valentin Bagorikunda, croit dur comme fer que Bob Rugurika et sa célèbre station la RPA, savent exactement, ou pire cacheraient ce fameux témoin, qui reconnaît avoir égorgé de ses mains l'une des trois religieuses. Et donc, le ministère public n'hésite pas à poser sa condition pour une libération immédiate du journaliste. La porte-parole des tribunaux et des parquets burundais, Agnès Bangiricenge : « Si cette personne venait à être mise à la disposition du ministère public, à la minute même, Bob serait mis en liberté provisoire pour avoir coopéré avec la justice en lui apportant une personne clé pour la suite des enquêtes en cours ».

La défense du directeur de la RPA se dit « très étonnée », et elle rappelle que pendant son interrogatoire, Bob Rugurika s'est montré coopératif et a donné toutes les informations à sa disposition, sur le groupe qui a assassiné - selon lui - les trois religieuses en septembre 2014.

Me Etienne Ntiyankundiye exhorte le ministère public burundais à faire son travail : « Mais c'est une condition aberrante et inacceptable. Il n'est pas chargé de se mettre à la place du ministère public pour faire le travail à sa place. Je condamne personnellement la paresse du ministère public ».

Mais ici, beaucoup ici parlent d'un simple prétexte pour garder Bob Rugurika en prison. Ils estiment que le pouvoir burundais, qui croit avoir trouvé une faille dans le travail de sa bête noire, la RPA, ne va pas lâcher le morceau.

Congo: appel à un dialogue national sur la Constitution

Par RFI

Au Congo-Brazzaville, le pouvoir et l'opposition, qui sont restés jusque-là sur des positions tranchées au sujet du changement de la Constitution dans la perspective de la présidentielle de 2016, semblent désormais mettre de l'eau dans leur vin. Ils appellent tous au dialogue. Mais, ils sont loin de s'accorder sur l'ordre du jour dudit dialogue qui doit être convoqué par le chef de l'Etat.

26 janvier 2015 - Lors de leurs dernières retrouvailles, marquées par l'absence de quelques alliés influents, le Parti congolais du travail (PCT), ses partis satellites, des associations et autres personnalités proches ont signé une déclaration appelant au changement de la Constitution.

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Au final, ils ont suggéré que toutes les dispositions soient prises pour créer une dynamique de dialogue et de concertation. Ce dialogue, l'opposition le veut bien, mais ne souhaite pas que la Constitution soit inscrite à l'ordre du jour.

Clément Mierassa du Parti social-démocrate congolais (PSDC) est ferme sur ce sujet : « C'est un faux débat, c'est un débat juridiquement infondé, politiquement désastreux, socialement explosif. Pour nous, il n'y a pas de dialogue sur le changement de la Constitution. Le dialogue devra se pencher sur les questions de gouvernance électorale et d'alternances démocratiques. Et nous sommes prêts et nous nous préparons pour cela. Nous sommes pour la paix. On a toujours été pour la paix. Moi, je suis de ceux qui pensent que la paix passe par le respect par tous, des lois et règlements de la République, pas par leurs violations. »

Pour toutes les parties, c'est au chef de l'Etat, Denis Sassou-Nguesso, que revient la responsabilité de convoquer ce dialogue.

Soudan du Sud: 11 morts dans une embuscade

Source: LeFigaro.fr avec AFP

26 janvier 2015 - Onze personnes, dont quatre journalistes travaillant pour des médias gouvernementaux, ont été tuées dans une embuscade dans l'ouest du Soudan du Sud, a affirmé aujourd'hui la radio indépendante locale Tamazuj.

L'attaque, menée hier, a visé un convoi de journalistes et de responsables locaux dans le département de Raja, dans la province de Bahr al Ghazal (ouest), a indiqué la radio, affirmant détenir cette information du gouverneur local, Rizik Zakaria Hassan. Les journalistes travaillaient pour la télévision sud-soudanaise et radio Wau.

La zone où l'attaque est survenue est frontalière de la région soudanaise du Darfour, en proie depuis des années à un conflit, et de la République centrafricaine. Plusieurs groupes armés sont actifs dans la zone. Radio Tamazuj a cependant indiqué que personne n'avait pour l'instant revendiqué l'attaque.

Le Soudan du Sud est lui-même en proie à un meurtrier conflit civil qui oppose, depuis décembre 2013, des hommes fidèles au président sud-soudanais Salva Kiir à d'autres loyaux à l'ancien vice-président Riek Machar. Ce conflit touche surtout le sud, le centre et le nord du pays, riche en pétrole. Rien n'indiquait donc non plus à ce stade que cette embuscade est liée à ce conflit.

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Darfour: un rapport accablant pour les milices pro-gouvernementales

Source: RFI.fr

Le groupe d'experts sur le Soudan a diffusé ces derniers jours son rapport sur le Darfour. Le texte revient sur la façon dont la crise a évolué au cours de l'année dernière. Il insiste sur la violence des attaques menées contre des civils par les Forces de soutien rapides, des milices pro-gouvernementales qui ont pris la succession des cavaliers janjaweds. Mais il s'interroge aussi sur le risque d'implantation des islamistes dans l'Ouest soudanais.

26 janvier 2015 - est une image de chaos et de violence qui ressort du dernier rapport du groupe d'experts sur le Soudan. De décembre 2013 à avril 2014, 3 324 villages ont été détruits et des centaines de milliers de déplacés ont dû fuir leur habitation. Selon le texte, « les chiffres n'avaient jamais été aussi importants depuis 2006 ».

A l'origine de cette situation, il y a tout d'abord l'opération Eté décisif menée par les nouvelles milices pro-gouvernementales, les Forces de soutien rapides. Les autorités ont appliqué la même stratégie que dans les premières années de la crise : cibler les communautés dont sont originaires les groupes armés, frapper les villages à partir desquels ils opèrent, provoquer le déplacement forcé des populations concernées.

Mais les experts estiment aussi que le climat d'impunité a conduit au développement d'une violence armée purement criminelle. Une violence qui révèle un peu plus « l'effondrement de l'ordre public » dans les cinq Etats de l'Ouest soudanais.

Dans un tel contexte, le rapport estime « que le Darfour pourrait être un terrain fertile pour l'infiltration d'islamistes radicaux », compte tenu de ses frontières poreuses et des solidarités entre des tribus présentes au Soudan et dans différents pays de la région. Mais les experts reconnaissent qu'ils n'ont pas encore pu évaluer si la menace était réelle ou si elle n'était que potentielle.

Soudan – Nouveau bombardement de l'hôpital géré par Médecins sans Frontières (20 janvier 2015)

Source: African Press Organization (APO)

Paris, 26 janvier 2015 - La France condamne le bombardement de l'hôpital géré par Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) à Frandala (Sud Kordofan), qui a blessé deux personnes, dont un employé de MSF. Après ce second bombardement en sept mois, MSF a annoncé être contrainte de suspendre son assistance à la population locale.

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La France rappelle que les attaques délibérées contre des hôpitaux et autres lieux accueillant malades ou blessés peuvent constituer des crimes de guerre.

Nous appelons au rétablissement dans les meilleurs délais de l'accès humanitaire dans les zones de conflit et à la reprise du dialogue entre parties, conformément aux engagements pris à Addis Abeba le 5 septembre 2014.