

## DRC: Peace in Pieces?

The recently established (although tenuous) peace in Burundi could have a positive effect on events in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and vice versa. Yet the situation in the DRC fluctuates between apparent progress in and collapse of the peace process.

Three key questions stand out at this point in the DRC:

- What is the current situation?
- What are the overall problems and options for SA foreign policy in the DRC?
- What is the likelihood for peace?; and what likely shape could it take?

### The current environment

The commitment of the signatories to the July 1999 Lusaka peace accord is vacillating at best, non-existent at worst. Recent pronouncements to this effect have been both confusing and contradictory.

On 15 August, DRC President **Laurent-Desire Kabila** left an 18-hour regional summit involving 11 heads of state and rebel leaders, after apparently refusing to allow a UN deployment in government-held DRC territory. Yet Zambian President **Frederick Chiluba**, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) mandated DRC mediator, claimed the next day that Kabila had a change of heart on the deployment issue, though this did not necessarily mean complete peace. He said skirmishes were likely to continue, 'But we want to let the UN know that this is not peculiar only to Africa after an agreement has been signed, even in the Middle East or East Timor, agreements have been reached but skirmishes have continued.' (It is important to note that there are apparent tensions between Pretoria and Lusaka over Chiluba's role. This should be watched with interest.)

The Lusaka agreement provided for a cessation of hostilities and also set out the structure of a Joint Military Commission (JMC) for its implementation. The Security Council formally established the UN mission in November 1999, authorising the deployment of 5,537 personnel, including 500 military observers. As of the end of August 2000, only 264 military observers were in place, however.

Permitting UN troops to deploy is one of only two remaining hurdles in the DRC peace process, the other

being the question of which party (or whom) should facilitate all-party internal talks. These talks are scheduled to include rebel representatives, including those of the three major groupings, the mainstream *Rassemblement congolais pour la democratie* (RCD-Goma) led by **Emile Ilunga** and supported by Rwanda; the breakaway Uganda-backed *Rassemblement congolais pour la democratie* (RCD-Kisangani) led by the RCD's former overall president **Ernest Wamba dia Wamba**; and the Uganda-supported *Mouvement de Liberation du Congo* (MLC) of businessman **Jean-Pierre Bemba** which is particularly active in the Equateur region, where Bemba is based at Lisala.

Kabila has also rejected the SADC-appointed facilitator for the internal process, former Botswana president Sir **Ketumile Masire**. President Chiluba has, however, denied that SADC sanctions are imminent in the fallout over the Lusaka summit to force Kabila to accept the peace plan.

On 23 August 2000, the UN Security Council voted to extend the mandate of the UN mission in DRC (MONUC)—due to expire—until 15 October, as recommended by the secretary-general. The extension was reportedly designed to allow time for further diplomatic activities in support of the Lusaka accord. The Council apparently expressed concern that doubts over access and security had prevented UNMONUC from deploying the authorised number of troops.

Yet, also on 23 August, Kinshasa officially suspended the Lusaka peace agreement. Kabila's allies—Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola—are currently also sending mixed signals on the implementation of the Lusaka process. Zimbabwean President **Robert Mugabe** has said that he fully supports Lusaka yet has implied that Kabila has a right to reject some of the provisions of the agreement. (On 29 August, Zimbabwe's finance minister, **Simba Makoni**, told parliament that Zimbabwe had spent over US\$200 million during its two-year military intervention in the DRC, a figure disputed as too conservative by regional commentators.)

**"Kabila's allies are currently also sending mixed signals on the implementation of the Lusaka process"**

Earlier, on 18 August 2000, Kabila had held talks with his Angolan counterpart **José Eduardo dos Santos** in Luanda. Dos Santos said after the meeting that: 'Our talks centred on the latest developments, namely the failure of the Lusaka summit.' He noted that 'We have analysed at length the causes of that failure and considered a number of possibilities aimed at putting the process back on track ... Nonetheless, we are still at a very early stage of our initiative, we will continue to hold discussions at this and other levels.' He said that Luanda saw UN Resolution 1304 on Congo as 'positive', noting: 'We support its legality and it is for this reason that we have been backing the DRC government militarily.' This Resolution demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC.

On 29 August, after meeting with President Mugabe in Harare, DRC Foreign Minister **Abdoulaye Yerodia** called for the immediate amendment of the Lusaka agreement in order to speed up the peace process, saying 'If we follow the Lusaka peace agreement, it will be used by our oppressors to prolong their stay in our country.' Zimbabwean Foreign Minister **Stan Mudege** has reportedly supported this call.

The RCD-Goma on 23 August denounced Kabila's suspension of the Lusaka peace accord. RCD-Goma's deputy Vice-President **Moise Nyarugabo** is reported as saying, 'We are ready to meet Kabila and discuss the truth of our country according to the Lusaka accord.' He called on the international community to assume responsibility and 'take measures and sanctions against Kabila'.

DRC Minister for Information **Didier Mumengi** and the Human Rights Minister **Leonard She Okitundu** outlined on 24 August 2000 in Lubumbashi the government's proposal to hold a quadripartite summit to 'bring face to face DRC, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda under the auspices of the UN and OAU'. They said suspending implementation of the Lusaka accord would not be revoked as it 'did not conform to the current reality'. They argued that the DRC was not opposed to the deployment of MONUC, which they contended was 'necessary and indispensable in the occupied territories'.

Yet the Special Representative of the UN secretary-general to the DRC, **Kamel Morjane**, had said on 24 August that Kabila had agreed to the deployment of UN troops in government-held areas. The breakthrough had reportedly occurred after the UN special envoy, former Nigerian president General **Abdulsalami Abubakar**, had held talks in Kinshasa with Kabila. He said a

decision to deploy the UN troops would be reached after a review of the situation by the Security Council. Although Kabila at the start of September apparently agreed to the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Mbandaka, Kananga and Kisangani, he simultaneously rejected the involvement of South African specialist units, potentially hindering the UN mission's progress. General Abubakar commented, after briefing the UN Security Council on 30 August, that overall the deployment might be delayed until the UN had found specialised units from other countries. The units are reportedly necessary for logistical tasks such as cargo handling, air traffic control and rescue services. Abubakar has said that since Kabila had agreed to certain conditions for the deployment of MONUC, 'it was now a matter of waiting for outstanding issues to be sorted out.'

Unsurprisingly, in the light of the above, on 6 September 2000, **Amadou Touré**, a spokesman for the UN Observer Mission in DRC, has said that Kinshasa must clarify its position on the 1999 Lusaka peace agreement before a planned deployment of UN military observers and support troops could proceed. He said, 'There have been some incomprehensible messages from the Congolese government and there has to be a clarification on this subject.'

**"It seems unlikely that Kabila will be able to extend his control over his entire country."**

### **Peace in pieces?**

Going forward, two immediate issues arise regarding the Great Lakes/DRC:

- Will Kabila and the various rebel groups be pressured to keep to the peace settlement in the DRC and move forward with inter-party talks and the deployment of peacekeeping troops?
- Will these peace agreements stick?

South Africa could make a sustainable potential peacekeeping contribution in the DRC of around battalion strength, some 1,200 troops, rotated on a six-monthly basis. The Army has around 9-10,000 deployable troops (of its total of 55,000), of which 6,000 are used for internal/ policing-support operations on any one day. However, the South African military currently cannot apparently conduct a quick insert or manage a hot extraction due to a shortage of transport aircraft, close-support helicopters and fighter-support. According to analysts, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) needs the minimum of 20 heavy transport aircraft available 'on the day'—it currently has only 12 C-130s of which six are operational. There is also not the necessary artillery-support available for quick transport by air. (The

may effectively play a greater role in bringing the parties closer together, so long as it takes unbiased, neutral positions.'

Foreign companies involved in Angola should expect focus and possibly criticism of their investment given the extent of social decay in the country. Although the Angolan oil company, Sonangol, has an annual revenue of more than US\$2 billion, the average annual per capita income of Angola's 12 million people is US\$260. Life expectancy is just 46, while in 1999 Angola ranked just 160<sup>th</sup> of 174 countries on the UN's *Human Development Index*, below countries such as Zambia, Benin, Malawi, Nepal, Madagascar and the DRC.

A first, enforceable step in achieving better governance in Angola must, however, be to maintain transparency in dealings with the Angolan government and senior officials. Revelations made in July by the former Director of Elf-Aquitaine, **André Tarallo**, that several covert payments from a secret slush fund were made to President Dos Santos and members of his family, have highlighted this concern.

Making Angola and the continent safe to do business through transparency and accountability has short-term costs not only for African elites. Western companies and governments perpetuate these conditions through their own business practices, in the same way that aid agencies perversely thrive in disaster and conflict situations. But the linking of contracts to better governance can only promote more accountable

leadership and more solid, long-term investment prospects.

### Conclusion

Most Angolans are, in the words of one Luanda-based diplomat, 'sick and tired of the war' and 'do not support a military option'. Yet foreign governments appear determined that a military solution is possible and, if the pronouncements of the UK Minister of State **Peter Hain** are anything to go by, preferred. Those who support a negotiated, political end to the conflict are, in this environment, dismissed as UNITA sympathisers.

A military campaign might win battles, but cannot by itself bring peace. Yet the government feels (and is supported in this by the international community) that it cannot rely on Savimbi at the negotiating table given his track record. Moreover, the continuation of the war provides the government with an excuse for poor governance and is used to explain its failure to uplift the majority of Angolans. Indeed, the worst case outcome for the MPLA might well be the capture or death of Savimbi—both because this would potentially fragment

UNITA and diminish its political agenda, creating a situation of warlordism; and because it would expose the logic of the political-economy driving the conflict.

The answer to this negotiation conundrum may be simple, but difficult to implement given the vested interests. The Mandela-Burundi model could provide the solution, but can only be implemented through a combination of international support and pressure on both sides to compromise.

**"The worst case outcome for the MPLA might well be the capture or death of Savimbi"**