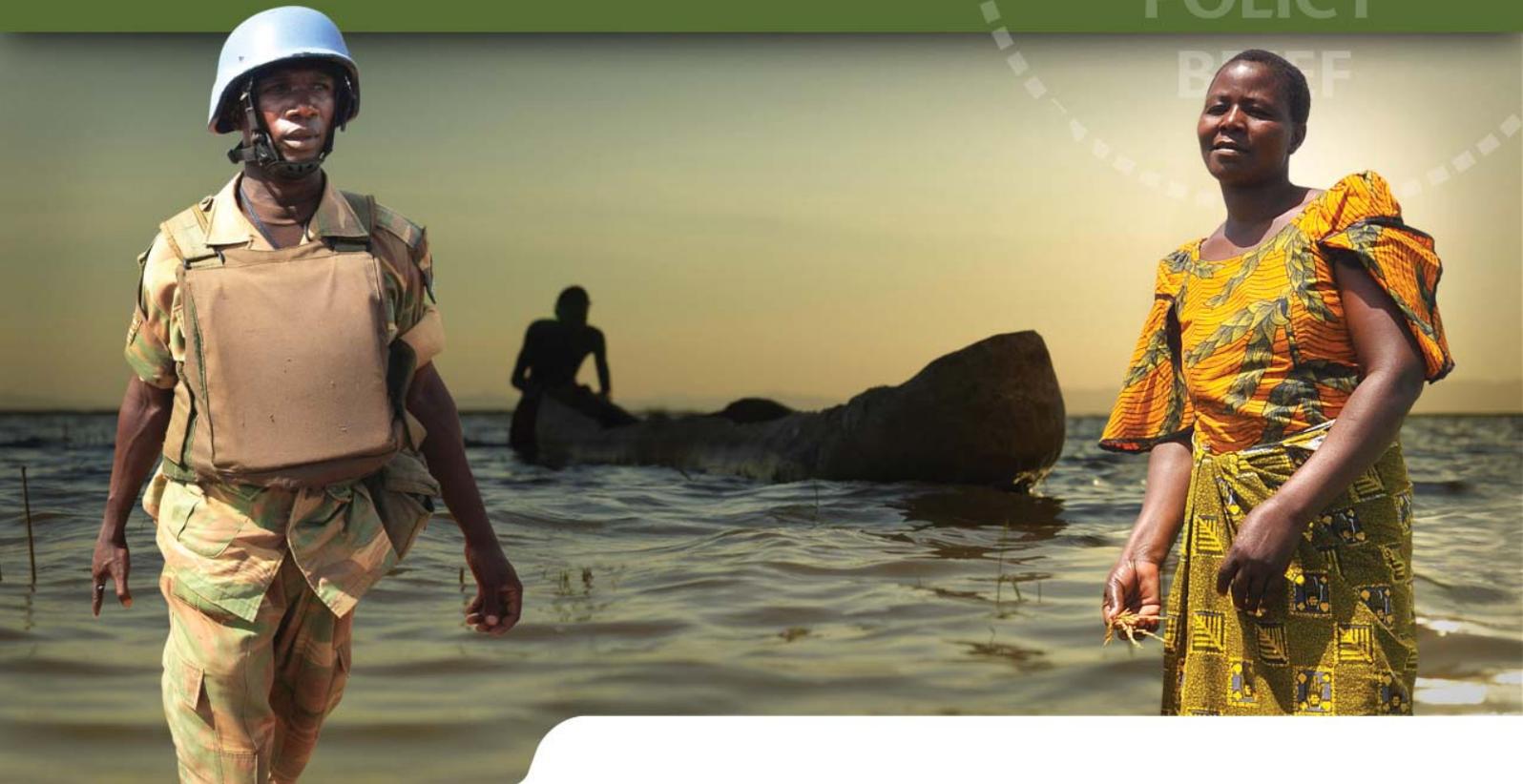


# 25

## POLICY

## BRIEF



CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

## SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

**Franschhoek, South Africa**

**Date of publication: July 2015**

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## Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa, hosted a policy advisory group seminar at Le Franschhoek Hotel, Western Cape, from 9 to 10 May 2015 on “Security and Governance in the Great Lakes Region”.

The Great Lakes region – focusing largely around Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Uganda – is central not only to Africa’s geography but also to continental security and governance. The seminar brought together about 30 mostly African policymakers, academics, and civil society actors to assess the major obstacles to peace, security, and governance in the Great Lakes region. The meeting, which focused in particular on the ongoing political crises in Burundi and the DRC, also sought to craft effective and credible strategies to overcome these obstacles.

### 1. The Great Lakes Region: Progress, Problems, and Prospects

Poverty, weak state and regional institutions, and the failure to undertake effective security sector reform have made post-conflict peace precarious, and governance uneven, in the Great Lakes region. The region has become a “militarised space”, and needs to remove militarist and autocratic influences from its politics. Citizens of the region are threatened both by armed groups, sometimes including the security forces of their own governments, and by breakdowns in the ability of states to provide public services and protection from common crime. Despite these daunting challenges, in the past decade there has been some progress towards the goal of achieving durable peace in the region. Notably, in February 2013 the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region was signed by the DRC, Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as the Central African Republic (CAR), Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Zambia, under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

“The ultimate aim in the Great Lakes region is the achievement of a durable peace in which its 127 million citizens can live their daily lives without fear”



HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR) IN LUANDA, ANGOLA IN AUGUST 2014.

Image source - ICGLR - CIRGL  
[https://twitter.com/\\_icglr/status/600334584010661889](https://twitter.com/_icglr/status/600334584010661889)

The ultimate aim in the Great Lakes region is the achievement of a durable peace in which its 127 million citizens can live their daily lives without fear. While security must be addressed as the foundation for the consolidation of peace and socio-economic development, military approaches like the SADC-led intervention brigade within the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) provide only partial solutions. Achieving durable peace will also require addressing the root causes of conflicts, which include weak and autocratic governance; illicit exploitation of natural resources; land disputes; unresolved questions of refugee resettlement and citizenship; inadequate trust among regional leaders; lack of reconciliation at the community level; and inequitable economic growth.

# 25

POLICY BRIEF

## 2. The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Two intertwined factors drive conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: weak state legitimacy, and interference by its neighbours. President Joseph Kabila is constitutionally prohibited from running for a third term, but may seek to do so by changing the constitution, or to prolong his stay in power by delaying the November 2016 presidential elections. A proposed census that would have required delaying of elections was blocked by the Congolese parliament in January 2015 after violent protests in Kinshasa. However, predictable problems with the complex local elections planned for October 2015 could be used as a rationale for delaying the presidential polls.

The persistent insecurity in the DRC that began with the 1996 to 2003 conflict, and is now localised in the country's eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, is deeply regionalised. Many of the largest and most dangerous militias in the Kivus are tied to conflicts in neighbouring states, including the Rwandan-backed March 23 Movement (M23), which was part of Rwanda's efforts to pursue its security and economic interests in the DRC. The international response to the violence in the eastern Congo has tended to be dominated by three assumptions: first, that the insecurity is primarily about national and regional conflicts over the illegal exploitation of resources; second, that the worst result of the war is violence against women (especially sexual violence); and third, that the solution is to expand state capacity. In reality, much of the violence is driven by local conflicts over land and political power (which regional actors such as Rwanda and Uganda have exploited). A disproportionate focus on violence against women can perversely allow armed groups to gain attention and leverage by perpetrating such violence. Finally, extending state capacity without first establishing state legitimacy may expose citizens to abuse and alienate them from the government in Kinshasa.

Two intertwined factors drive conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: weak state legitimacy, and interference by its neighbours



LAKE TANGANYIKA IS AN AFRICAN GREAT LAKE, ESTIMATED TO BE THE SECOND LARGEST FRESHWATER LAKE IN THE WORLD. THE LAKE IS DIVIDED AMONG FOUR COUNTRIES – THE DRC, BURUNDI, TANZANIA, AND ZAMBIA.

Image source - Scribol  
<http://scribol.com/environment/10-deepest-lakes-on-earth>

## 3. Burundi

President Pierre Nkurunziza is seeking to take advantage of an apparent loophole in the constitution to run for a third term, in violation of the 2000 Arusha agreement, which formally ended the phase of the country's civil war that started in 1993 and killed an estimated 300,000 people.

The current crisis indicates deeper problems in the political and social arrangements that have prevailed in Burundi since the end of its civil war by 2005. The ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) has never seemed to hold the Arusha agreement in high regard. It refused to sign the accord in 2000, and only ended its armed opposition in 2003. In 2010, the CNDD-FDD gained unrestrained power over the government, as a result of an opposition boycott of the elections, and has since sought to consolidate its power and shrink the space for dissent and democratic participation. Any long-term resolution of Burundi's challenges must not only enforce democratic norms but also support the development of more mature democratic institutions, a task that should be led by African powers such as South Africa.

## 4. Regional Actors: Rwanda and Uganda

The aggressive foreign policies of Rwanda and Uganda towards the region, particularly their support for armed groups in the DRC, has already contributed to instability in the Great Lakes. While it is easier to criticise Kigali and Kampala when they violate the sovereignty of other countries, respect for sovereignty should not continue to deflect attention from domestic repression in both countries. Uganda and Rwanda are formally multi-party democracies with elections approaching in 2016 and 2017, respectively. However, they are both effectively dominated by a single party, with long-serving leaders who have taken steps to restrict effective internal dissent.

In only 21 years since the 1994 genocide that killed an estimated 800,000 people, Rwanda has become touted by its supporters as an example of successful development and an “island of stability” in a troubled region. However, its gains in areas such as the provision of public services mask the fact that its stability is based largely on fear. The government engages in violent suppression of dissent at home, and also supports armed groups in the DRC. Uganda has played the role of both “arsonist” and “fire-fighter” in the region. It has supported several peace initiatives, including the Kampala peace talks that led to the surrender of the M23 in December 2013, but it has also backed armed groups that have fuelled conflicts in the DRC.

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UN FORCES NEAR GOMA, THE CAPITAL OF NORTH KIVU PROVINCE, CLOSE TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO'S BORDER WITH RWANDA, IN AUGUST 2013.

Image source - Aljazeera  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/inside-story/2013/08/201382761918639520.html>

## 5. Regional Actors: South Africa, the Southern African Development Community, and the African Union

South Africa has long played a critical role in peacebuilding efforts in the Great Lakes region. In Burundi, former South African president Nelson Mandela took over facilitation of the Arusha peace process in 1999 after the death of the former president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. South Africa's deputy president (now president), Jacob Zuma, succeeded Mandela in this role in 2002. Under President Thabo Mbeki, Tshwane (Pretoria) began hosting the inter-Congolese dialogue in Sun City in 2002, which led to the adoption of a transitional constitution for the DRC in 2003. South Africa explains its involvement in the Great Lakes region as acting within the framework of its membership of SADC. The organisation's involvement in the Great Lakes dates back to 1997, when the DRC became a member with strong support from South Africa. MONUSCO's current 3,000-strong intervention brigade, authorised in March 2013, is composed of troops from SADC members South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi.

The African Union has also been an active player in the Great Lakes region, for more than a decade. In 2003, it deployed the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB). The 3,335-strong mission was led by South Africa and included troops from Mozambique and Ethiopia. AMIB was the first peacekeeping mission wholly planned and executed by members of the African Union. Since May 2013, the African Union and the United Nations have also jointly convened a regional oversight mechanism for the Great Lakes Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework.

# 25

POLICY BRIEF

## 6. External Actors: The United Nations and the European Union

The United Nations faces a pressing challenge in the DRC. In February 2015, UN military operations in the DRC were effectively halted. The immediate cause was the Kabila government's decision to put two commanders who had been "red-listed" by the UN over allegations of human rights abuses in charge of the Congolese army's operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). While the UN ban technically only applies to joint operations with the sanctioned commanders, military cooperation in general was affected by the dispute. The world body is also under pressure from Kinshasa to reduce its 20,000-strong peacekeeping force by more than a third. The most promising way forward is the creation of a concrete roadmap, one clearly and unequivocally endorsed by all major stakeholders and communicated not only to the government of the DRC, but also to the governments of its neighbours.

The Great Lakes region faces two core problems: animosity between national leaders, and the DRC's inability to control its eastern provinces effectively. In the European Union's (EU) analysis, neither problem is likely to be resolved without a focus on building the diplomatic and security sector reform capacity of regional organisations, such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community. Regional intelligence capacity also needs to be developed in order to address illicit economic exploitation. In the short to medium term, Brussels is prepared to continue funding the security efforts of Africa's security architecture, as seems necessary given its currently limited capacities. In the long term, however, the level of donor dependency in African institutions will remain a problem that leaves African regional bodies vulnerable to external agendas.

“The Great Lakes region faces two core problems: animosity between national leaders, and the DRC's inability to control its eastern provinces effectively”



MEN WORKING IN A TIMBER WORKSHOP OF ENRA, A TIMBER COMPANY IN BENI, EASTERN DRC.

Image source - SAIIA: South African Institute of International Affairs  
<http://www.saiia.org.za/news/the-trade-in-tropical-timber-in-africas-great-lakes-cui-bono>

## Policy Recommendations

The following ten recommendations emerged from the Franschhoek policy advisory group seminar of May 2015.

1. Autocratic governance structures throughout the Great Lakes region hinder national socio-economic progress, and have spread instability. Regional states themselves should adopt measures to ensure public debate and accountability for their foreign policies. Regional organisations such as SADC, the EAC, the ICGLR, and the AU can contribute to these changes by strengthening their diplomatic engagement in support of norms of democracy and human rights, as well as promoting civic engagement and civic education.
2. Central to any peacemaking strategy in Burundi must be efforts to address the divisions in the country's ruling CNDD-FDD and opposition parties, as well as the violence of the CNDD-FDD's *Imbonerakure* youth wing. Urgent diplomatic efforts are required to resolve the ongoing political impasse, but longer-term efforts to develop the capacity and democratic



commitments of political parties in Burundi, as well as to reform politicised government agencies such as the National Commission on Land and Other Assets (CNTB) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), are also essential.

3. Security sector reform throughout the region is a critical need. The Great Lakes region is a militarised space, in which political and military institutions have often become fused in ways that have hindered the development of democracy. A concerted diplomatic and reform effort is therefore urgently needed not only to prevent abuses among organised armed actors, but also to move states away from the use of fear and repression in their governance practices more generally.
4. Grassroots, bottom-up initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation, such as the work of local non-governmental organisations (including women's organisations) and traditional conflict resolution processes, should be supported with financial, logistical, and technical resources. Examples of existing projects that could be built upon, or learned from, include the East African Court of Justice's (EACJ) cooperation with civil society organisations in Uganda to promote human rights, the Swiss Tujenge Amani! programme in the DRC's Kivu provinces, and Dutch support for decentralised land registration in Burundi.
5. Governments in the region and their external supporters should strengthen the conflict resolution capacity of existing regional structures, such as the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the East African Community. One immediate way to strengthen the capabilities of regional organisations in the Great Lakes could be for SADC to complete its efforts to establish a liaison office in the DRC.
6. The African Union and the United Nations should take the lead in efforts to address the challenges of the Great Lakes region, assisted by African powers such as South Africa. The European Union, the United States, and China should play a supporting role. A coordinated, consistent, and coherent strategy will allow different actors to leverage their particular strengths, avoid partiality, and prevent regional actors from engaging in "forum shopping" that plays different mediators off against each other.
7. There must be a process of consultation and coordination among SADC, the AU, and other regional organisations, backed by the UN (including its technical bodies, such as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO]), and the EU, to create a concrete roadmap and a unified strategy to resolve the impasse between the UN peacekeeping mission and the government of the DRC in order to forestall similar difficulties in the future. This strategy must be clearly conveyed not only to the government in Kinshasa, but also to governments in Kigali and Kampala.

“The African Union and the United Nations should take the lead in efforts to address the challenges of the Great Lakes region, assisted by African powers such as South Africa”



CONGOLESE ASYLUM SEEKERS IN BURUNDI WHO ENTERED THE COUNTRY IN SEPTEMBER 2012.

Photo - UNHCR/B.Ntwari  
Image source - UNHCR  
<http://unhcr-regional.or.ke/news/democratic-republic-congo-burundian-refugees-arrive-south-kivu>

# 25

POLICY BRIEF

“ The UN peace-keeping force in the DRC should develop an effective end-game to its 15-year mission in the country ”



SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS AT A TRAINING SESSION IN THEIR COUNTRY AS THEY PREPARE TO LEAVE FOR THE DRC IN MAY 2013.

Photo - AFP  
Image source - News of Rwanda  
<http://www.newsofrwanda.com/featured/18717/south-african-peacekeepers-chase-away-refugees-from-drc-base/>

8. The UN peacekeeping force in the DRC should develop an effective end-game to its 15-year mission in the country. One element of this strategy could be a redeployment of existing UN troops to strengthen the SADC-led intervention brigade. However, any exit strategy must be carefully considered and developed in cooperation with the AU, regional organisations, and the Congolese government in order to ensure that responsible national and regional structures are in place and adequately resourced before the UN withdraws from the country.
9. An international regime should be established that monitors and punishes illicit exploitation of the DRC's mineral resources; such a system should be backed by the creation of a regional intelligence facility under the auspices of SADC or the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Without a more effective regime than the one currently in place, there will be insufficient incentive for regional actors to stop plundering the Congo's resources.
10. Donor governments, the AU, and others with influence over Rwanda and Uganda must prevent these two countries from destabilising the region. Neither the legacy of the Rwandan genocide nor parochial national interests should stand in the way of holding all countries accountable to the same human rights standards. The AU, African governments, and the broader international community should ensure that norms relating to human rights and democratic governance are enforced in an even-handed manner including, where appropriate, through the use of targeted sanctions and judicial prosecutions.