

SUMMARY

For over a decade, Canada played key roles during pivotal moments in the Great Lakes Region of Africa (the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda).¹ Though Canada's prominence in the region recently waned, its links there necessitate political leadership – especially as instability is increasing and opportunities for constructive engagement materialize.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

1. Land & Citizenship – Prioritizing Root Causes of Conflict

Community level conflicts over land rights, often linked to the ambiguous citizenship status of particular populations, are major causes of the region-wide insecurity in the Kivus. Policy to address these causes of conflict has yet to be explored by donor countries and the United Nations (UN).² Canada can break new ground with peace-building efforts in the DRC by:

1.1. Drafting a resolution and providing funding to expand the mandate of the UN Group of Experts on the DRC, 'Group of Experts', to identify and analyze conflicts over land rights and ambiguous citizenship statuses in the Kivus. The resolution should provide for the identification of local initiatives already addressing these issues.

2. Engage the United Nations

Canada has a long history of engaging with the Great Lakes Region through the UN. Though the mission in Afghanistan limits engagement with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Canada, as a lead supporter of the UN's Gender Equality Architecture Reform³, can:

2.1. Call for this agency to assume an overseer role for the multiple UN agencies currently operating in the DRC. Provide funding to map NGOs/UN agencies in the Kivus to identify gaps and overlaps in services – this will increase the efficiency and accountability of these actors.

2.2. Request that the agency investigates the possibility of using the findings of the forthcoming UN inventory/map, which documents serious human rights and international humanitarian law violations in the DRC between 1993 and 2003, to establish a commission to investigate crimes of sexual violence committed in the DRC during this period, as requested by local Congolese women's initiatives.⁴

1 Information on Canada-DRC and Canada-Rwanda relations can be found at ACAC's website. For Uganda see, Erin Baines, draft paper Canadian Advocacy and Uganda's Stolen Children (2007).

2 See Chris Huggins, Research Fellow at the African Centre for Technology Studies, Nairobi or Koen Vlassenroot, Professor of Political Science at the University of Ghent.

3 An Under-Secretary General, to lead a UN 'mega-agency' for women is expected to be created by 2011.

4 See the Coalition for Women's Rights in Conflict Situations demands at <http://www.rdcviolencesexuelle.org/site/en/node/35>.

3. Promote Transparency

Allegations of Canadian mining companies' misconduct in the Kivus demonstrate the need for binding legal mechanisms to protect vulnerable communities. The Government of Canada must:

3.1 Pass Bill C-300, the Corporate Accountability for the Activities of Mining, Oil or Gas Corporations in Developing Countries Act, as a step towards adopting and legislating the more holistic recommendations of the 2007 Advisory Panel on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

3.2. Work with the UN Group of Experts on the DRC to develop a map of mineral-rich zones in the Kivus. Specifically, oblige the CSR Centre of Excellence to request that Canadian mining companies based in the Kivus cooperate with the UN to develop the map.

4. Invest Locally

Congolese women refuse to be passive victims of war; they are leading the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. To capitalize on Congolese civil society's expertise with campaigns against sexual violence and ensure aid effectiveness, Canada must:

4.1 Make long-term funding available to local women's groups in the Kivus by designating the DRC as a Canadian Global Peace and Security Fund priority and creating a CIDA fund that routes money through Canadian NGOs with experience working with local organizations.

5. End Impunity in Canada

Canada and Rwanda have an established relationship that generally benefits both countries. Unfortunately, this relationship has facilitated the entry of Rwandan génocidaires into Canada. In 2009, the UN released a report that described the global network of the Forces Démocratiques de la Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) – a notorious Kivus-based rebel group linked to extremist Hutu Rwandan génocidaires – which aids the conflict in the Kivus by providing monetary resources from afar. This network is partially based in Canada. Though many armed groups in the DRC abuse human rights, Canada's links with this particular group demand targeted action.⁵

5.1. Extradite suspects to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) when requested.

5.2. Make financial resources available to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police "A" Division (War Crimes Section) on an 'as needed' basis.

5.3. Place the FDLR on Canada's list of Recognized Terrorist Entities

5.3.1 Recognizing that many members of the FDLR are child soldiers or not génocidaires Canada must simultaneously support the UN's efforts to disarm, demobilize, repatriate, resettle, and reintegrate (DDRRR) FDLR combatants, particularly children.

⁵ For thorough discussion on these topics see 'Policy Brief: Ending Impunity in Canada with Respects to Conflict in the D.R. Congo' available online on ACAC's website, www.africacanada.org.