

# Hopes for Peace in Congo Still Elusive

by Uwe Friesecke

The Feb. 9 summit meeting between Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.) President Joseph Kabila and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania, revealed once again, how dubious are all the so-called Congo peace agreements signed in recent months.

Congo has been torn apart by invading armies and internal insurgencies for more than a decade. Since 1990, when Uganda's President Roweri Museveni sponsored the invasion of Rwanda by Paul Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front, the militaries of Rwanda and Uganda have allied to invade Congo twice: in 1996-97, to overthrow President Mobutu Sese Seko and impose Laurent Kabila as President; and in August 1998, in a bid to oust Kabila, to seize the eastern Congo as their own zone of interest, and to loot the Congo of its diamonds, gold, and timber on behalf of their Anglo-American financial sponsors. More than 2 million Congolese have died as a result of the war in the eastern Congo, where Uganda and Rwanda have imposed a brutal occupation. Laurent Kabila was assassinated on Jan. 16, 2001, and was replaced by his son Joseph.

On Sept. 6, 2002, mediated by Angolan President José Eduardo Dos Santos, the governments of the D.R.C. and Uganda signed an agreement in the Angolan capital of Luanda, which stipulated that Uganda would withdraw all its troops from eastern Congo. At the time, Museveni assured his Congolese counterpart that only a few battalions of Ugandan troops remained, and were being withdrawn at that very moment. Six months later, Museveni admits that he still has 2,000 troops there. Now, in Dar es-Salaam, the foreign ministers of both countries have again signed an agreement pledging to abide by the Luanda Accord of September 2002. And Museveni, demonstrating once again his well-known hypocrisy, declared: "We shall not tire in our efforts to achieve peace." This time, the Ugandan Army is supposed to complete its withdrawal from Congo by March 20.

Moustapha Niasse, the special envoy of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for the peace process in the D.R.C., has announced that a transitional government for Congo should be in place by the end of March or early April. Such a government was agreed upon by all parties to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), when they signed an "all-inclusive power-sharing deal" on Dec. 17, 2002 in Pretoria, South Africa.

The agreement stipulated that Kabila would remain President for the next two years, until the first elections since Congo's independence from Belgium in 1960 are held. In the

transitional government, there will be four vice presidents representing different factions (see *Interview* following), 36 ministers, 25 deputy ministers, a 500-member National Assembly, and a 120-member Senate.

The ICD, which started on Oct. 15, 2001 in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia's capital, was brought to the December 2002 agreement by the close stewardship of the South African government, acting under the dominant influence of U.S. and British diplomats who made sure that the powerful interests of Anglo American Corp. and other such raw material corporations were not neglected.

## The Foreign Players

The fraud in this negotiating process was evident from the beginning, because it never really was an "inter-Congolese" dialogue. Two of the main actors were and are to this day controlled by non-Congolese forces: the Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC) by Museveni's Uganda and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD-Goma) by Rwanda and its President Paul Kagame. Additionally, the MLC, which controls the North and Northeast of the country, includes a strong group of former Mobutu power brokers. In this way, U.S. and British policy made sure that Uganda and Rwanda achieved politically, what they were not able to achieve militarily during four years of war: to be in Kinshasa and to control Congo. After Angola and Zimbabwe withdrew from Congo some 12,000 troops supporting President Joseph Kabila, he had no choice but to give in to the mounting pressure from the Anglo-American and South African governments to come to agreement with his enemies. Before he signed the Luanda deal with Uganda's Museveni, he had already agreed to sign a deal with Rwanda's Kagame on July 30, 2002 in Sun City, South Africa.

While Kabila's government had lost the support of troops from Angola and Zimbabwe, Uganda and Rwanda never seriously withdrew their military influence over the Ituri and Kivu provinces in eastern Congo, bordering Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi; they only changed tactics. Rwanda pulled out its soldiers, only to send some of them back in disguise, to restructure and fill the military branch of the RCD-Goma rebels and to sponsor new autonomist movements for the Kivu. Rwanda also created a rapid reaction force on the border, which can be deployed into the Congo as needed. Uganda, in the meantime, not only kept its troops in Congo, but according to the D.R.C.'s chief negotiator, Vital Kamerhe, it created a "new rebellion" in Ituri province—the Union of Patriotic Congolese (UPC), led by three Ugandan generals. The ink on the Pretoria agreement from December 2002 was not yet dry, when heavy fighting started again in eastern Congo.

The situation is even further complicated by the fact that tensions between Uganda and Rwanda are on the rise, with each side accusing the other of planning coups. And some of the rebel groups have shifted their loyalties between the two regional powers.

To prevent the Pretoria agreement from collapsing altogether, the Kinshasa government, at the end of January, sent a delegation to the United States led by chief negotiator Kam-erhe and Information Minister Kikaya bin Karubi (see *Interview*), to ask the U.S. government to step in and save the deal. While it is a realistic assessment that Washington holds the key to Congo's future, it is a miscalculation on the part of Kabila's government to hope that Washington would rein in the two war-Presidents of the Great Lakes region, Museveni and Kagame.

After all, the game for Congo still is, who controls the access to the raw materials. And attention has shifted from the Shaba and Kasai provinces, which were looted by the Belgian colonialists and during Mobutu's time, to the eastern part of the country, especially the Kivu provinces, which up until the mid 1990s were left relatively untouched. They contain enormous wealth of gold, timber, diamonds, and, most importantly, coltan. Coltan has emerged as a key strategic mineral because it is used in all electronic capacitors in mobile phones, for civilian and military usage.

Since 1998, Uganda and Rwanda have both developed a system by which they loot eastern Congo, either directly through forced labor and their respective military, or indirectly through so-called rebel movements and local warlords. Uganda's capital Kampala and Rwanda's capital Kigali have become the centers for transfer of the loot from eastern Congo to the world market. This arrangement has been blessed by the Anglo-American powers, and there is no sign that Washington and London would change it, unless a future Kinshasa government would guarantee the same outcome. Forcing Kabila into accepting the deal with Uganda's and Rwanda's proxies is supposed to accomplish just that. But this will not achieve peace and stability for the Congo. Because as the Congolese in the eastern part of their country know very well, peace will only come if Kampala and Kigali are forced to accept it.

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## Interview: Kikaya bin Karubi

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# Can New Treaties Lead To Peace in Congo?

*Kikaya bin Karubi is the Minister of Information of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He was interviewed by Lawrence K. Freeman on Jan. 19 in Washington, D.C.*

**EIR:** At the end of 2002, a lot of meetings were held in South Africa, and agreements were signed to try to bring an end

to the war in the Congo, bring some stability, and set up procedures for a transitional government made up of *all* the opposing political forces in the country. Could you give us a report on what kind of agreements were signed, and what are the prospects for peace and tranquillity in the Congo?

**Kikaya:** What happened was that we signed, in Pretoria, [South Africa], with Rwanda, what we call the Pretoria Agreement. And in Luanda, Angola, we signed another agreement with Uganda. With these two agreements, the external reasons for the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.), as described in the Lusaka [Zambia] cease-fire agreement, disappears; because these two documents cater to the preoccupations of these two countries—Rwanda and Uganda—because the security concerns that they said were the reasons for the war, will no longer exist. And secondly, for the D.R.C., its national sovereignty and territorial integrity will be accomplished, because there will be no more war. So with these two agreements, the external reasons for the war disappear.

And then, in December, we signed an agreement with all the warring parties in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and we called that agreement “the all-inclusive and global agreement.” And that agreement says that we will have an inclusive transitional government that will be in charge of the organization of free and fair elections within two years. So that the people can decide on who their leaders must be.

**EIR:** You say that all the parties have signed this agreement. That would mean the RDC-Goma [backed by Rwanda], the MLC [backed by Uganda], and other parties in the Congo. Are they all now following the agreements? Or are there still pockets of fighting and resistance to these agreements in the Congo?

**Kikaya:** Well, they all signed the agreement. But the paradox is that we observe an increase in hostilities in eastern parts of the D.R.C. As a matter of fact, after we signed the Luanda Agreement with Uganda, Uganda created a new rebellion: the UPC, Union des Patriotes Congolaise—the Union of Congolese Patriots, as it is called. This is another rebellion that was created by Uganda. And given the fact that that new rebellion is signatory to none of the agreements that I mentioned earlier, they continue fighting in the Ituri Province.

The truth of the matter is that in the Ituri Province, several generals in the Ugandan Army profit from the chaos there—to exploit gold, coltan, and also timber and coffee. So they are not interested in seeing peace prevail in the Ituri Province. That's why they have created a new rebellion. That way they can continue their activities of looting the national resources of the Congo.

And also in Uvira, and in the area of Fizi/Baraka, we also observe some fighting going on there. But there again, it's also a matter of Rwanda this time, profiting from the chaos, and exploiting coltan, and all the natural resources that you find in those areas.