

DDRRR: POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND LINKAGES

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Introduction

The presence of several thousand armed foreign combatants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo lies at the heart of the conflict in the Great Lakes region. Unless and until this problem is resolved, lasting peace cannot be restored. The presence of foreign armed groups is not only damaging to internal security, but also represents a standing obstacle to the improvement and normalisation of relations between the DRC and its neighbors. It is therefore clearly in the interests of all countries concerned, and of MONUC and the international community, to resolve this problem.

The disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration (DDRRR) of foreign, particularly Rwandan, combatants in eastern DRC is a highly complex challenge, involving political, economic, social, logistical and security-related elements. In MONUC's view, notwithstanding the various layers of complexity, and the daunting problems of security, terrain and logistics, the problem is essentially political in nature. This chapter will therefore address the political dynamics and linkages of the DDRRR process, whether they become apparent in MONUC's interactions with Rwandan combatant groups deep in the forests of Congo, or the deliberations of the Security Council and the World Bank in New York, Washington and other world capitals. From that point of view, it would be useful briefly to recall the relevant historical background.

The conflict in Zaire/DRC arose out of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and its immediate aftermath, when more than one million Rwandans, mostly Hutu and including much of the former Rwandan national armed forces (*Forces Armées Rwandaises* - FAR), streamed across the border into the then Zaire at Goma and Bukavu to escape the advancing forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which subsequently established a Government in Rwanda.

Despite a resounding defeat at the hands of the RPF, the military elements among the hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees gradually regrouped and resumed their control over the civilian population. Before long, they had managed to reconstitute in the refugee camps in eastern Zaire the same kind

of iron control they had been accustomed to exercise in Rwanda itself under the Habyarimana regime.

During 1995 and 1996, the former Rwandan armed forces – known as ex-FAR – and the Interhamwe militia, who together bore much of the responsibility for carrying out the genocide, used the UNHCR refugee camps as a rear base from which to mount cross-border raids into Rwanda. Their main objective in these raids, which grew in size and ferocity during that period, was to destabilise the new Rwandan Government and to murder survivors of the genocide. In this they received at least the tacit support of the then Zairean Government of President Mobutu, who was either unable or unwilling to prevent the armed Rwandan groups from conducting these raids.

In May 1994, the Security Council imposed an arms embargo (which is still in force) on these armed Rwandan groups. However, despite the embargo, the ex-FAR/Interahamwe continued to receive supplies of arms and ammunition, again with the connivance or support of the Zairean Government.

In September/October 1996, a dispute flared up between the Zairean Government and the Rwandophone Banyamulenge community in South Kivu that resulted in President Mobutu stripping the Banyamulenge of their Zairean citizenship. Fighting broke out, and a little-known group known as the Allied Forces for Democratic Liberation (*Alliance de Forces Democratiques du Liberation*- AFDL), with Banyamulenge and Rwandan support, rose up against the Government.

Contrary to initial expectations, the AFDL enjoyed spectacular military successes against the Mobutu regime, which proved rotten to the core. By March 1997, the AFDL had seized Kisangani, and from there they marched westwards through the forest until, after meeting little resistance along the way, they seized the capital itself in May 1997. President Mobutu fled and Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who had emerged as the leader of the AFDL, was proclaimed President, whereupon he changed the country's name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Initially, the Kabila government enjoyed close relations with Rwanda, to the extent that Rwandan officials actually occupied senior positions in the DRC Government and armed forces. However, relations became increasingly strained, and in July/August 1998 an open break occurred, when President Kabila ordered the Rwandans out of the DRC. Soon after, an armed rebellion broke out in eastern DRC and the country was again plunged into conflict. In order to forestall a strong attack on Kinshasa, President Kabila issued an urgent call for assistance to the Governments of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, all of which sent troops to fight on the side of the DRC Government. The Ugandan Government sent troops into North Kivu and Orientale provinces at about this time, and Chadian forces also became involved.

DDRRR in the context of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement

In view of the need to safeguard the security of Rwanda and to prevent a resumption of cross-border attacks, the need to disarm, demobilise and repatriate the foreign armed groups operating on DRC territory was set as a major objective of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, along with the withdrawal of all foreign Governmental forces and the inter-Congolese dialogue. In paragraph 11 of Article III of the Agreement, the signatories stipulated that the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, should be requested to constitute, facilitate and deploy a peacekeeping force in the DRC to “track down all armed groups”.

The armed groups were listed in the annex of the Agreement as “forces other than Government forces, RCD and MLC that are not signatories to this Agreement. They include ex-FAR (Rwanda), Allied Democratic Forces (Uganda) (ADF), Lord’s Resistance Army (Uganda) (LRA), UNRF II, National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (Uganda) (NALU), Interahamwe militias (Rwanda), Former Ugandan National Army (Uganda) (FUNA), Forces for the Defence of Democracy (Burundi) (FDD), West Nile Bank Front (Uganda) (WNBFF), UNITA (Angola) and any other forces.

Article III of the Lusaka Agreement also states, in paragraph 22, that there should be a mechanism for disarming militias and armed groups, including the genocidal forces. In that context, all parties committed themselves to locating, identifying, disarming and assembling all members of armed groups in the DRC. The countries of origin of those armed-group members committed themselves to taking all necessary measures to facilitate their repatriation. These measures could include the granting of amnesty, in countries where such a measure had been deemed beneficial. It should not, however, apply in the case of suspects of the crime of genocide. The parties assumed full responsibility for ensuring that the armed groups operating alongside their troops or on the territory under their control complied with the processes leading to the dismantling of those groups in particular.

In chapter 7 of the annex to the Agreement (which concerns the Joint Military Commission – JMC), the JMC was supposed to work out mechanisms for disarming armed groups, and to verify their disarmament and quartering, as well as verifying the disarmament of all Congolese civilians in illegal possession of firearms. In accordance with paragraph 11 b of Article III of Lusaka, the JMC would be responsible for carrying out peacekeeping operations until the deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping force.

In chapter 8 of the annex, the Lusaka parties set out what they considered should be the mandate of that United Nations peacekeeping force. This mandate should include, in their view, tracking down and disarming armed

groups; screening mass killers, perpetrators of crimes against humanity and other war criminals; handing over genocidaires to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR); repatriation; and working out such measures (persuasive or coercive) as appropriate for the attainment of the objectives of disarming, assembling, repatriation and reintegration into society of members of the armed groups.

Chapter 9 of the annex, which deals in more detail with the disarmament of the armed groups, states that the JMC, with the assistance of the United Nations and the OAU, should work out mechanisms for the tracking, disarming, cantoning and documenting of all the armed groups in the DRC, as listed above, and put in place measures for handing over to the ICTR or national courts mass killers and perpetrators of crimes against humanity, and the arraignment of other war criminals.

The parties, together with the United Nations and other countries with security concerns, should create conditions conducive to the attainment of this objective, including the granting of amnesty and political asylum, except for genocidaires.

United Nations' approach to DDRRR

In setting forth MONUC's mandate, the Security Council, which is the sole body empowered to create and mandate United Nations peacekeeping operations, adhered closely to many aspects of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The military mandate of MONUC generally conformed to the Lusaka provisions on the disengagement and withdrawal of foreign forces, while responsibility for the civilian political aspects of Lusaka – the inter-Congolese dialogue – were entrusted to neutral facilitator, Sir Ketumile Masire, and not to MONUC.

However, MONUC's mandate in respect of DDRRR differed significantly from the approach adopted by the Lusaka signatories, as reflected above. The main difference in approach was that Lusaka envisaged forcible disarmament, whereas the Secretary-General and the Security Council stated from the outset that any DDRRR programme undertaken by MONUC must be voluntary. MONUC has always adhered to the voluntary principle, and will continue to do so.

There are many reasons for this, not least because it would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify troop-contributing countries willing to contribute contingents to be deployed in eastern DRC for the forcible disarmament of groups accused of genocide and other serious crimes against humanity, at least in sufficient numbers and with a sufficiently robust mandate. It was believed that such an operation might last for years and could entail heavy casualties, as well as an extremely heavy logistical and supply burden on local infra-

structure with a very slender capacity. Finally, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General issued in July 1999, immediately after the signing of the Lusaka Agreement, "The problem of armed groups is particularly difficult and sensitive... A purely military solution appears to be impossible, if only because the forces most able and willing to impose a military solution have clearly failed to do so".² On the basis of the experience it has gained in DDRRR over the last two years in particular, MONUC still believes this to be the case. The first element of that experience was gained during the operation to demobilise and repatriate the Rwandan combatants at Kamina.

The United Nations has been involved in several disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration operations, including in Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique and Cambodia. However, the DDRRR of foreign armed groups in the DRC is different from those operations in many important respects. The first is that the armed groups in the DRC have signed no agreement with MONUC or with any other party, still considering themselves at war. In addition, some of their leaders and an unknown number of their members face serious criminal charges before an international tribunal. This means that the United Nations cannot contemplate making a political deal with the leaders of this movement. As stated above, it is MONUC's fixed policy that we consider the FDLR to be neither a party nor a partner in the DDRRR process, and will not engage in political discussion with those who say represent it. The problems of infrastructure, terrain, security, communications and transportation are all more acute in the DRC than they were in most of the other countries the United Nations has worked in. Finally, since the combatants are foreign, they cannot be reinserted into the society where they are, but must be repatriated, adding an international dimension to the problem that did not exist in other operations.

Case Study: DDRRR at Kamina

In September 2001, during the visit of the Secretary-General to the DRC, President Kabila proposed that MONUC assume responsibility for the demobilisation and repatriation of some 2,000 Rwandan combatants at the Government military base of Kamina, in Katanga Province. The Rwandans, who had been aligned with the DRC's Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Congolaises* – FAC) and had been disarmed by them, were still in uniform and under military command.

From the outset, despite the invitation of the Congolese Head of State, MONUC encountered difficulties with the Kamina group. There appeared to be a certain scepticism towards the operation in both the DRC and Rwandan Governments, and the attitude of the men's commander, who gave his name

as Colonel Vincent Ndanda, was particularly negative. The logistics of dealing with the Kamina group were also difficult, inasmuch as MONUC had no installations nearby, and the MONUC teams dispatched there from Kinshasa were not permitted to spend the night on the base, but had to accommodate themselves in Kamina town, some 30 kms distant, on a very poor road.

Nevertheless, MONUC's team succeeded in performing an initial screening of the Kamina group by late October 2001, establishing that there were a total 1,981 adult male combatants of Rwandan nationality at Kamina and in two small related groups in Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. There was also a small number of dependent women and children. The screening was carried out on the basis of the DDRRR form approved by the Joint Military Commission and the Political Committee established by the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. In order to establish to its satisfaction that the combatants were in fact Rwandan, MONUC made use of a special DDRRR linguistic unit comprising Rwandophone Congolese to assist in interviewing them. To assess their military status, the combatants were asked to perform a military test involving stripping and reassembling a rifle and carrying out parade-ground manoeuvres.

Very little further progress was then made until April 2002, when the Security Council sent a mission comprising its entire membership to visit the Great Lakes region, including Kinshasa and Kigali. As part of the preparation for the visit, the DRC Government agreed to hand over to MONUC some 1,000 functioning light arms taken from the Kamina group. MONUC first disabled the weapons, and then destroyed them by fire in a public ceremony witnessed by the Security Council mission on 30 April 2002. Plans were also made to send a small group from among the Kamina combatants and their dependents to Kigali during the Security Council mission's visit there as a confidence-building measure. However, it did not prove possible to arrange this exploratory visit at that time.

Impetus of the Pretoria Agreement

Fresh impetus to this process was provided by the signing of the Pretoria Agreement on 30 July 2002 by the Governments of the DRC and Rwanda. The Pretoria agreement, facilitated by the Government of South Africa, required Rwanda to withdraw its troops from DRC territory, and for the DRC army to track down the ex-FAR/Interahamwe within the territory under its control, and to work with MONUC and the JMC in dismantling those forces. The subsequent withdrawal of Rwandan forces from DRC territory in September-October 2002 squarely placed the onus on the DRC Government to carry out its side of the agreement.

On 24 September, the DRC Government declared the FDLR *persona non grata* and all its activities on DRC territory illegal. The Government then expelled eight leaders of the Rwandan politico-military group known as the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (Forces for the Democratic Liberation of Rwanda - FDLR) from the DRC. Initially they went across the river to Brazzaville, but the Government of the Republic of the Congo sent them back. The eight remained for some weeks in uncomfortable conditions at the "Beach", the Kinshasa ferry terminal across from Brazzaville, while efforts were made to find a solution. Eventually, they were flown to Kigali under the auspices of the TPVM, the third-party verification mechanism established by the Pretoria agreement. However, the United Nations members of the TPVM were not consulted about this step beforehand, and MONUC took the view that it represented a forced repatriation.

Further forward movement in the DDRRR process occurred about this time with the arrest of a number of major genocide suspects, including Augustin Bizimungu, Tharcisse Renzaho and Jean-Damascène Ngendahimana. MONUC also resumed its sensitisation operations at Kamina with a view to persuading combatants there to participate in an exploratory visit to Rwanda, where they would see for themselves the changed situation in their home country, and return to Kamina to inform their comrades of what they had seen. This time, following intensive consultations in Kinshasa and Kamina, agreement was reached to conduct an exploratory visit to Kigali and elsewhere in Rwanda for about 80 members of the Kamina group.

The exploratory visit was conducted between 30 September and 10 October 2002. Participants received a briefing from Rwandan Government officials in Kigali on arrival, and were then transported to their home communes to see for themselves the conditions prevailing there and to meet with friends and family. On their return to Kamina – three of them elected to stay in Rwanda – they set about describing their experiences to the other members of the Kamina group, aided by extensive audio and video coverage of their visit taken by MONUC public information personnel.

This resulted in an immediate increase of the number of Rwandans coming forward for repatriation at Kamina. However, this was accompanied by an increase in tension at Kamina base as Colonel Ndanda and his associates in the leadership of the group embarked on a course of intimidation designed to prevent Rwandans from returning. Intimidation was also increasingly directed at MONUC personnel. At MONUC's request, the DRC Government deployed additional troops at Kamina to protect the DDRRR operation and MONUC staff, as well as Rwandans wishing to enter the process. Tension continued to rise as MONUC discovered towards the end of October that the Rwandan combatants, supposedly disarmed by the DRC Government the previous year, had in fact gained access to arms.

Early on 1 November 2002, a group of armed Rwandans from Kamina base attacked Kamina town, where the MONUC teams had spent the night. Fighting also broke out at the base where, according to reports, Colonel Ndanda and his supporters tried to storm the arsenal. MONUC evacuated its team immediately. By the time the Government allowed MONUC to send its team back to Kamina on 7 November, the situation had been transformed.

The MONUC team that returned to Kamina a week after its evacuation found the Government fully in control both of the town and the base. It emerged that many of the Rwandan combatants – possibly as many as 1,300 or so – had fled the base into the countryside, leaving only a few hundred, as well as women and children. MONUC repatriated all of them to Kigali over the next few weeks, and suspended operations at Kamina after a final repatriation on 25 November. Though MONUC could not consider the Kamina operation satisfactorily completed, because of the flight into the bush of some 1,300 combatants, the Kamina dossier was effectively closed on that day. In all, a total of about 750 Rwandans, of whom about half were combatants, were repatriated from Kamina.

International cooperation for DDRRR

The requirement to repatriate the foreign combatants from the DRC, as noted above, lends to this process an international dimension that most other DDR operations in which the United Nations has participated did not have. MONUC maintains offices in Kampala, Kigali and Bujumbura at least in part to liaise with the Governments of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi on DDRRR-related matters, including the repatriation of their nationals from the DRC.

However, the main focus of international cooperation in DDR arises from the involvement of the World Bank and the Multi-country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), established by donors to assist the Governments of nine countries in central Africa with the problems of scaling down their armed forces and consolidating peace efforts in the greater Great Lakes region. Within the vast scope of this regional strategy for demobilisation and reintegration (MDRP), the specific problems of MONUC's DDRRR of Rwandan and other foreign combatants from the DRC represents only a relatively small part. However, the international community is aware that there can be no lasting peace in the region as long as the presence of foreign armed groups in the DRC persists. The \$53 million Rwandan Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (\$25 million World Bank credit, \$14 million MDRP grant and the rest in bilateral contributions) aims at supporting Government reintegration efforts, including provisions for the return of ex-combatants from the DRC. The institutions established by the Rwandan Government for

that purpose – the National Unification and Reintegration Commission and the Rwandan Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission are already established and functioning efficiently. However, donors and the World Bank itself are well aware that the intractable and complex nature of this problem merit very serious attention, and both the Bank and individual donors continue to keep the situation in the DRC under very close review. With recent political developments both in the DRC and in Rwanda, the donor community expects a positive impact of the DDRRR process on the planning and implementation of DDR of Congolese which is being conducted in parallel.

MDRP partners have conducted a series of review missions to the Great Lakes region, and individual donors are in regular contact with MONUC and concerned embassies and agencies in Kinshasa. The next partners' review mission will visit Kinshasa, eastern DRC and regional capitals in October 2003 and meet again in Kinshasa in November to review progress.

Profile of the armed groups today

In April 2002, MONUC drew up a survey on the armed groups that included information available at that time on their numbers, leadership, deployment locations, armaments and, so far as it could be known, their likely intentions. Since then the situation has changed considerably. MONUC now estimates that there are some 15,000-20,000 combatants in eastern DRC, with up to 30,000 dependents. The great majority of these are Rwandan, though there is also a relatively small number of Ugandan ADF/NALU fighters. MONUC also estimates that there are some 3,000-4,000 Burundese FDD. MONUC assumes there to be a number of foreign nationals serving alongside Congolese in the national armed forces, but has no estimate of their number.

After the closure of the Kamina dossier, MONUC pursued DDRRR operations in three main sectors: Lubero, Goma and Bukavu. Lubero was the site of MONUC's only reception centre, established in December 2002 to accommodate what was thought to be approximately 4,000 Rwandan combatants within walking distance who had shown signs of interest in entering DDRRR. MONUC military and civilian personnel had been established at the major border towns of Goma and Bukavu since very early in the MONUC mission. At each location, the problems and opportunities of DDRRR were somewhat different.

By now all the Rwandan combatants in eastern DRC proclaimed themselves to be FDLR, and no longer wished to be considered as ex-FAR, Interhamwe or ALIR, the *Armée de liberation du Rwanda*, considered a successor organisation to the ex-FAR/interahamwe. The representatives of the Rwandans that MONUC encountered in the bush paid at least nominal alle-

giance to FDLR leaders based in Europe. However, as noted above, MONUC does not consider FDLR to be either a party to the peace process or the DDRRR process, or a partner in its DDRRR operations. The furthest MONUC was willing to go was to discuss with persons it considered to be authoritative representatives of Rwandan combatants and their dependents such technical modalities as security, transportation, timing and numbers of persons to enter DDRRR. MONUC informed those representatives, who identified themselves as FDLR, that it had no mandate to discuss any political pretensions they might have in Rwanda, nor to act in any sense as a conduit between those groups and the Government of Rwanda.

Further south, in Bukavu, FDLR influence appeared to be less pervasive, with groups of Rwandan combatants appearing less hostile and suspicious towards MONUC and more willing to consider entering DDRRR. However, the problem there was the complexity of relations with the Mayi-Mayi, community-based Congolese fighters dedicated to resisting the Rwandan occupation forces and their allies. While the Mayi-Mayi evince hostility to all Rwandans on DRC territory, they have in fact entered into de facto alliances with ex-FAR/Interahmwe elements in their common struggle against Rwandan Government forces in Congo. In fact, in any Congolese military environment, Rwandan combatants are generally considered the best fighters, and therefore tend to be sought after by belligerent parties. One of the reasons MONUC is so concerned to reduce levels of insecurity is that, as long as fighting persists, Rwandan combatants in the DRC will tend to become embroiled in one side or other. When the conflict eases, the military stock of the Rwandans falls, making them less attractive to local authorities and more likely to be interested in joining MONUC's DDRRR programme.

At both Lubero and Bukavu the situation was further complicated by a continuing military campaign waged by RCD (Goma) forces in the first few months of this year. Whatever the objectives pursued, these offensive actions had the effect of scattering into the forest groups of combatants painstakingly assembled by MONUC DDRRR teams who had persuaded them to enter the process. This happened several times during February and March 2003, causing many in MONUC to conclude that disrupting DDRRR operations was a deliberate policy of RCD (Goma) and, by extension, of Rwanda, at least at the working level. The culmination of these attacks took place at the end of March, when 300 Rwandan combatants and their dependents who had been persuaded to assemble at Kasuo prior to entering the nearby Lubero reception centre dispersed into the forest following RCD (Goma) attacks on Muhanga and Bunyatenge.

Strangely enough, none of these considerations appeared to affect repatriation operations around Goma, the seat of RCD (Goma) authority. After a slow start, a steady stream of Rwandan combatants and dependents began to filter

through Goma, encouraged by local facilitators working with the Goma DDRRR team. The team then established temporary assembly areas – very austere sites comprising a few tents and a United Nations flag in a forest clearing – to receive Rwandans in a stream that continues to flow even now, making Goma the most productive site for DDRRR operations since Kamina. This fact does seem to cast doubt on the hypothesis that the RCD (Goma) deliberately set out to disrupt DDRRR operations, since if that was the case they would hardly have permitted such a large repatriation to take place within a stone's throw of their own headquarters.

During the third quarter of 2003, three or four important developments emerged, which are expected to exercise considerable positive influence over the willingness the Rwandan combatants to enter DDRRR and MONUC's ability to disarm and repatriate them - the installation of the transitional government; the operational deployment of the MONUC task force based at Kindu (the South African task force); and the relative calm and stability that have returned to the Kivus. The fourth element is the August 2003 presidential election in Rwanda, and the huge majority secured by President Kagame.

The results of these developments have begun to become apparent. MONUC's contacts with the armed groups in the north now reveal a guarded new interest in entering DDRRR, which might lead to a resumption of the agreement MONUC had reached with them last March. MONUC has even now entered into contact with a major new group, the Ugandan ADF, which the mission had sought to contact more than a year ago, but which had been lost sight of during the fighting in Ituri. Encouraging statements made both by military and civilian authorities in Goma and by the new DRC government seem to indicate a willingness to work with MONUC to advance DDRRR. The statement of the incoming Minister of Defence that his country would never allow its territory to be used as a base for attacks on its neighbours is particularly welcome.

MONUC is now working with the Government to encourage further progress in this direction, both in Kinshasa and in the Kivus. One important step forward would be a joint meeting between the DRC and Rwandan Governments, with MONUC, to discuss practical modalities for moving DDRRR forward, including a joint information and sensitisation strategy.

The role played in DDRRR by MONUC's Public Information Division has been central. Though Radio Okapi cannot, for technical reasons, reach many areas in the forest, we believe that its message is often conveyed by word of mouth, through local NGOs, churches and so on with which MONUC is in touch. Since repatriation operations began a year ago, MONUC public information officers have visited Rwanda repeatedly to interview repatriated combatants and their families and broadcast the interviews over Radio Okapi. MONUC also conveys messages from repatriated Rwandans to those still in

the forest. Invariably, the interviews and messages stress how far the lives of those who have returned home have improved, and often they encourage their former comrades by name to return as well as.

One possible way in which the armed-group problem could be resolved peacefully is if the Government of Rwanda and the leadership of the combatants in the field – in effect, the FDLR or some successor organisation – came to a political accommodation. However, MONUC is not in a position to propose this to the Rwandan Government, and will not make any proposal to the FDLR.

In the absence of a political agreement, MONUC will continue its practice of encouraging Rwandan combatants on an individual basis to come forward to enter DDRRR. In some respects, these individual combatants may be considered deserters, at least from an FDLR point of view. MONUC is aware that, where FDLR commanders are particularly hard-line, combatants expressing interest in entering DDRRR have been very severely dealt with, and some have been killed to discourage others from joining the process. As the incident in Kamina on 1 November shows, MONUC must also continually guard against the possibility that FDLR might attack United Nations personnel or installations or DDRRR convoys as well, if they are sufficiently desperate to stop the process.

Conclusion

As previously emphasised, MONUC's approach to DDRRR is purely voluntary. However, the DRC transitional government, or a future elected Government, are not bound by that requirement. A sovereign State has a perfect right to deal forcefully with foreign armed fighters illegally operating on its territory. The installation of a legitimate central Government disposing of a unified national Congolese army, in control of its borders and desiring good relations with its neighbours, will sound the death knell for the foreign armed groups on Congolese soil. They thrive in the current climate of insecurity and uncertainty in eastern DRC, but cannot long survive if normality is imposed, especially if normality is accompanied by an increase in economic and social standards for the local population and in the countries of origin. Under those circumstances, if the armed groups survive at all, it will be only as isolated bandit groups with no political significance.

It is in this context that the new mandate of MONUC, and particularly the mandate to assist the transitional government with the disarmament and demobilisation of Congolese combatants, must be viewed. In the long run, the DDRRR of foreign combatants and the DDR of Congolese combatants are parallel tracks towards the restoration of civilian authority throughout the coun-

try. The specific link between the two is twofold: in the east, the disarmament, demobilisation and reinsertion into society of the Mayi-Mayi will deprive the Rwandan and other foreign combatants of an ally, while the formation of a unified national Congolese army is expected to lead to the removal from its ranks of foreign fighters. MONUC looks forward to assisting the DRC Government with both endeavours.

Notes

1. Mr. Peter Swarbrick was appointed Head of MONUC's DDRRR Division in February 2002. Prior to this appointment, he served as Director, Political Affairs Division, MONUC .
2. UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, (S/1999/790), 15 July 1999, paragraphs 21-22.