

## CRISIS – SPECIAL CONFERENCE

### Background:



A vast country with immense economic resources, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) has been at the centre of what could be termed Africa's world war. This has left it in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. The five-year conflict pitted government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, against rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda. Despite a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, the threat of civil war remains.

Despite coup attempts and sporadic violence a fragile peace has held since the formal end of the war. But the Kinshasa government has no control over large parts of the country and tension remains high in the east. Moreover, the lot of DR Congo's citizens is little improved.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the site of one of the world's worst ongoing humanitarian crises. Although the country emerged from what has been called "Africa's first world war" in 2003 when the former warring belligerents came together to form a transitional government, credible mortality studies estimate that up to 1,200 people continue to die each day from conflict-related causes, mostly disease and malnutrition but ongoing violence as well. Rampant corruption and pervasive state weakness allows members of the national army and members of armed groups alike to perpetrate abuses against civilians.

With the help of the world's largest and most expensive peacekeeping operation, MONUC (which numbers 17 000 men), the country overcame major logistic and political challenges to hold its first free and fair elections in 40 years in July and October 2006. However, the country faces substantial challenges, including the creation or recreation of state institutions that are accountable to the Congolese people and the construction of an integrated and professional army that protects civilians rather than abuses them. Renewed violence in the east, as well as recent brutal government crackdowns in the west, has underscored the country's continued fragility.

North Kivu is again a crucible of conflict in Congo. Since fighting resumed between the insurgents of Laurent Nkunda and President Joseph Kabila's government in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in December 2006, the conflict has claimed thousands of lives and displaced over a million people in the eastern DR Congo over the last two years. The crisis has become much worse since May 2007. UN attempts to impose a ceasefire and appoint a special envoy to mediate have failed.

The renewed fighting in recent weeks, following the breakdown of a ceasefire agreement agreed upon earlier in the year, has left millions of civilians facing a humanitarian crisis.

Although the government of Rwanda denies reports by Kinshasa that it backs Gen. Nkunda's forces, reports of Angolan troops fighting alongside the DRC army are likely to renew fears of a wider regional conflict in the Great Lakes.

**Source:** *International Crisis Group*  
*Relief Web*

## **CRISIS – SPECIAL CONFERENCE**

The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo was established on 12 March 2004 to oversee the relevant sanctions measures and to undertake the tasks set out by the Security Council in paragraph 15 of resolution 1807 (2008).

The Security Council first imposed an arms embargo on all foreign and Congolese armed groups and militias operating in the territory of North and South Kivu and Ituri, and on groups not party to the Global and All-inclusive agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 28 July 2003 with the adoption of resolution 1493. The sanctions regime was subsequently modified and strengthened with the adoption of resolutions 1533 (2004), 1596 (2005), 1649 (2005) and 1698 (2006) which, among other things, expanded the scope of the arms embargo, imposed additional targeted sanctions measures (travel ban and an assets freeze), and broadened the criteria under which individuals could be designated as subject to those measures. On 31 March 2008, the Security Council adopted resolution 1807 (2008), amending and renewing until 31 December 2008 the sanctions regime on the DRC, and extending the mandate of the Group of Experts for the same period.

### **Crisis Scenario:**

Is it possible to prevent the outbreak of another “African World War”? Under pressure from NGO’s, European governments concerned with the humanitarian situation, and others, the Special Conference on African Common Market is mandated by the Secretary General of the United Nations to attempt to find solutions to the crisis and to defuse the tension.

With the rising number of victims, through malnutrition, displacement, ethnic conflict, etc... the situation in North Kivu finally grasps the attention of the world. In a gripping and award winning documentary by James Cameron, which has been viewed by millions, the fate of DR Congo citizens, and through them of millions of Africans, has been highlighted and vividly emphasized.

This really seems to be the “meeting of the last chance”!