

## Democratic Republic of Congo

This was a difficult year for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), despite the efforts made in 2009 to weaken and dismantle armed groups operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and despite improvements in regional relations.

Over the course of the year, the security situation in the east deteriorated significantly as new alliances between Congolese and foreign armed groups emerged in North Kivu and as both the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued their deadly reprisal attacks against civilian populations in the Kivus and Orientale Province.

Meanwhile, a six-month popular insurgency emerged in the western province of Equateur, and the national army—the Forces Armées du République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)—continued its predatory practices against civilians. In March 2010, the relationship between MONUC and the government of the DRC reached crisis levels, as Kinshasa called for the United Nations to withdraw all of its peacekeeping forces by mid-2011, two years earlier than UN planners had anticipated.

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### Background

The conflict in the Congo can be seen as three interlocking wars. The first began in September 1996 as an invasion (of what was then Zaire) by a coalition of neighboring states. The invasion ousted President Mobutu and replaced him with Laurent Kabila in May 1997. The second Congo war broke out in August 1998 when a similar configuration of neighboring states, some of whom had been Kabila's patrons in the first

war (notably Rwanda), broke with him and attempted a similar ouster, but this time without success. Resulting from the stalemate in the conflict and considerable external pressure, the war ended with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in July 1999. Signatories to the agreement included the Congolese parties and the neighboring states involved in the conflict.

The withdrawal of most foreign troops shortly after the signing of the agreement created a power vacuum in rebel-held territories, and a third war began behind UN-monitored cease-fire lines in northeastern Congo. This war was fought between ever-smaller groups—foreign and domestic—that have since become significant actors in the illicit activities in that region. In June 2003, following a national dialogue and a series of regional agreements, a government of national unity—consisting of leaders representing almost every local actor in the wars—was sworn in. This transition culminated in a UN-supported national election in 2006. Joseph Kabila was narrowly elected president after two hotly contested rounds of voting.

Four years after that landmark election, the UN mission in the Congo—renamed the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO)—has entered its fourth and, some expect, final phase. Phase one was the initial UN deployment of a small observer mission in 1999 following the second Congo war—the one that erupted in August 1998. Its initial mandate, authorized by Security Council Resolution 1279, was to support the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

Phase two coincided with the political transition in the Congo begun in 2003. By 2004, MONUC had grown into a substantial integrated mission with the mandate to support the

government of national unity, the transition, and the complex and expensive national electoral process held in 2006.

The mission’s third phase began in 2009 when, in keeping with its reinforced mandate, MONUC entered a more robust peacekeeping phase, focusing largely on the unfinished business of the stabilization of eastern Congo. A series of joint military operations with the Congolese national armed forces against armed groups in the east yielded mixed results and came under heavy criticism for its failure to protect civilians. Most significantly, these joint military operations, conducted with a national army known for human rights abuses, exposed the operational tensions in the mission’s multiple mandates called for in Resolution 1856.

The UN mission entered its fourth and final phase on 28 May 2010 when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1925, substantially reconfiguring the UN mission in the Congo and reframing the force as a stabilization mission. Resolution 1925 authorized the withdrawal of up to 2,000 troops from the country, further concentrated the mission’s attention on civilian protection and military operations in the east, and established a reserve force that can react, in principle, to incidents throughout the country. Coming on the heels of efforts by the Congolese government to see a substantial reduction in the UN’s presence, Resolution 1925 marked the beginning of a process that, barring the resumption of regional hostilities, will ostensibly culminate in the mission’s departure.

**From MONUC to MONUSCO**

Signs of the growing tensions between the government of DRC and MONUC were evident throughout the latter half of 2009 amid international concern over the deteriorating security situation in the country and the inability of the Congolese armed forces and the UN mission to protect civilians.

On 4 March 2010, during a UN technical assessment mission to the DRC to discuss a gradual, three-year disengagement plan that had been proposed earlier by the UN, President Kabila



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<b>UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)</b>	
Authorization and Start Date	30 November 1999 (UNSC Res. 1279)
SRSR	Roger Meese (United States)
Force Commander	Lieutenant-General Chander Prakesh (India)
Police Commissioner	Abdallah Wafy (Niger)
Budget	\$1,369.0 million (1 July 2010–30 June 2011)
Strength as of 31 October 2010	Troops: 17,112 Military Observers: 715 Police: 1,181 International Civilian Staff: 948 Local Civilian Staff: 2,782 UN Volunteers: 597
<i>For detailed mission information see p. 203</i>	

instead called on MONUC to begin withdrawing its forces in June 2010 and complete the drawdown by June 2011. This was a sudden departure from Kinshasa’s earlier request that the UN submit a plan for the progressive drawdown of the mission by 30 June 2010, the country’s fiftieth anniversary of independence. It also

underscored the degree to which the relationship between MONUC and the Kinshasa government had deteriorated over the course of the year.

Understandably, the DRC government sought to satisfy a domestic constituency still searching for a peace dividend from the 2006 transition. Announcing the withdrawal of the world's largest peacekeeping mission on the country's fiftieth anniversary of independence would send a powerful message that the DRC has made progress and that the country is marking a new beginning—a key message of national pride for an incumbent president entering the 2011 electoral-campaign cycle. However, violence and serious human rights abuses by armed groups and national security elements alike continued throughout the country, prompting a public outcry that discussions about withdrawing UN forces on an accelerated timetable were based on political considerations rather than on a realistic assessment of conditions on the ground.

Given the limited capacity of Congolese armed forces to take over security responsibilities, a precipitous withdrawal of MONUC forces would create a dangerous power vacuum, especially in the east, and risk whatever progress had been made to date. The stalled national security sector reform process underscores the risks to civilians should MONUC pull out too rapidly and without achieving the objectives set by the Security Council in its mandating resolutions. This is highlighted by the FARDC's inability to hold territory "cleared" of armed groups and by the continued human rights abuses committed by integrated FARDC units, especially in areas of the Kivus dominated by the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP).

After extensive diplomatic pressure, Kinshasa softened its position on the drawdown and the MONUSCO compromise was reached. A former United States ambassador to the DRC, Roger Meese, replaced Alan Doss on 1 July 2010 as head of the new stabilization mission. As of 31 July 2010, the mission's total strength stood at 19,685 uniformed personnel, a figure

that takes into account a drawdown in mid-2010 of 1,700 troops.

The mission's new, twelve-month mandate further concentrates the military force of the UN mission in three provinces in the east—North and South Kivu and Orientale—and turns over the other eight provinces to MONUSCO's civilian components to support peace consolidation and stabilization efforts. Under the new mandate, the further withdrawal of UN troops is conditional, to be geared to conditions on the ground and to a joint assessment exercise of those conditions with the DRC authorities. Largely approached as a confidence-building exercise, the first joint assessment missions were held in July and August 2010. While some reports suggest that this process has established a good basis for improved communication with the DRC government, others have criticized the process as rushed and its methodology flawed as it lacks a mechanism to allow civil society to comment on the findings.

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### Political Developments

On 4 April 2010, a budding insurgency that had emerged a few months earlier in the western province of Equateur—the Enyele insurgency—swept into Mbandaka, the provincial capital of Equateur, catching Congolese authorities and UN peacekeepers alike by surprise. The insurgents were able to occupy the airport almost without resistance and killed one UN peacekeeper before the Congolese army and MONUC contingents forced them to withdraw the following day. The attack was by no means the most deadly of the insurgency, nor its largest battle: in late 2009, attacks on the sector capital of Dongo Centre had killed numerous civilians and caused massive displacement. However, the significance of an unforeseen, unopposed attack on a provincial capital outside the volatile eastern part of the country was not lost on observers, and many were left scrambling to explain the unexpected events.

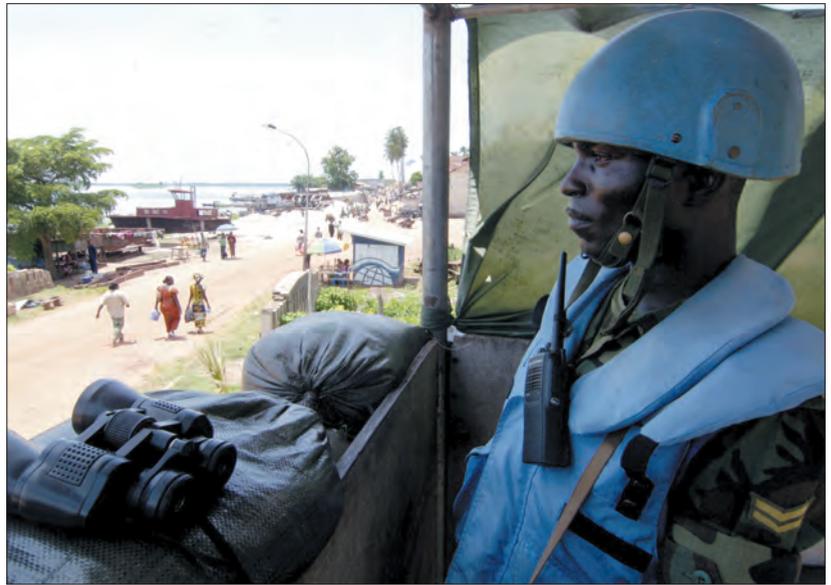
Born of local grievances and backed by a wide array of opposition forces both inside the

country and in the diaspora, the Enyele insurgency was projected into an environment in Equateur ripe for unrest. Notable factors were the presence of former DPP security forces (Jean-Pierre Bemba's Division de Protection Présidentielle) in Gemena and Congo-Brazzaville; the prevalence of hundreds of disgruntled, unemployed, and demobilized soldiers; and an ongoing institutional crisis in Equateur's provincial government and sense of political exclusion under both President Laurent and President Kabila.

Although the Enyele insurgency ended with its leader's arrest in neighboring Congo-Brazzaville, the factors that allowed it to metastasize on a national scale persist. Deep-seated grievances and tensions among some communities in Equateur remain unresolved, as in other provinces. These grievances include a growing frustration with political repression, combined with the absence of effective state governance and authority. In Bas-Congo Province, tensions between the popular politico-religious movement Bundu Dia Kongo (BDK) and government authorities continue unabated since the so-called BDK massacres of March 2008 by state security services. In Katanga, two potential threats to stability include a possible resurgence of historic, interethnic violence and, to a lesser extent, a revival of secessionist sentiments. Endemic poverty, the competition for economic resources, and the return of displaced populations remain potential sources of conflict across much of the country.

While progress has been made in some areas on the national economic front—for example, roads are being built thanks to bilateral agreements; economic growth is up; and the DRC has reached the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) completion point, wiping out millions of dollars of national debt—these other broader dynamics are likely to challenge the successful implementation of any stabilization strategy in DRC that assumes all areas but eastern DRC to be free of civil unrest.

That said, the bulk of the current violence is concentrated in eastern Congo, where the



A Ghanaian peacekeeper stands guard in front of the local port in the DRC's northern Equateur province of Mbandaka, 13 April 2010.

Katrina Mason/Reuters

implementation of the March 23 agreements between the government and armed groups in the Kivus remains at a standstill. New alliances of convenience between residual Congolese and foreign armed groups and between them and Congolese army officers are locked in fierce competition for control over lucrative mining interests. These intense rivalries have devastating consequences for civilian populations in the region. Attacks on civilians routinely include sexual violence, lootings, and abductions, and continue to result in one of the highest rates of displacement in Africa today.

In North and South Kivu Provinces, targeted FARDC military operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and their Mayi-Mayi allies are ongoing, some with the support of MONUSCO, despite limited results in neutralizing the FDLR. The FLDR and Mayi-Mayi groups continued their reprisal attacks against civilian populations, especially in mineral-rich Walikale territory between July and September 2010, when civilians were looted, killed, raped, and kidnapped. CNDP-integrated FARDC units have themselves been accused of targeting civilians

and are considered by many humanitarian agencies as some of the worst perpetrators of sexual violence in the region. In North Kivu, the ADF-NALU (an alliance between the Allied Democratic Forces and the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda) has reportedly reemerged and been the target of FARDC military operations.

In Orientale Province, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues to operate between the northeast of the DRC, the Central African Republic, and southern Sudan. The group routinely attacks civilians and is accused of carrying out a repeat of its December 2008 "Christmas massacres" again in December 2009, when it killed more than one hundred civilians in remote villages in Haut- and Bas-Uélé. On 13 December 2010, the mission announced that it would re-deploy 900 peacekeepers to the Dungu district of Upper Uele region in preparation for potential "holiday season" attacks. Of concern also is the impact that the 2011 referendum process in Sudan might have on the LRA dynamic. Joint FARDC and Uganda People's Defence Forces operations targeting the LRA continue, with MONUSCO logistical support. The regional threat presented by the LRA, however, and the remoteness of northern Orientale Province have severely challenged MONUSCO's increasingly limited resources and its ability to effectively protect civilians targeted in reprisal attacks.

The mission's failure in July and August 2010 to respond to more than 300 rapes committed by FDLR and Mayi-Mayi fighters in remote villages in the Walikale region of North Kivu—a mere twelve kilometers from a nearby MONUSCO base—demonstrates that the DRC remains a challenging environment for civilian protection. While the mission acknowledged its failure to respond and has since instituted several new measures to improve communications with remote villages, budget cuts that have accompanied the shift from peacekeeping to stabilization and the anticipated loss of fourteen attack helicopters by the end of 2010 will only further complicate MONUSCO's ability to respond to threats against civilians.

Part of the challenge of any stabilization strategy in the DRC will be delinking armed

groups from the political economies and criminal networks that sustain them. The UN expert groups have been an effective tool for investigating and exposing those involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources. However, follow-up has been inconsistent, and arrests have been difficult and few.

With regard to the security sector reform process, the DRC authorities have expressed a preference for bilateral arrangements and have limited the role of the new UN mission to training police battalions and supporting military justice.

As 2010 drew to a close, the DRC entered into a new electoral dynamic, and the 2011 election cycle is likely to provide significant challenges to MONUSCO's stabilization efforts. The election calendar announced by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) in September 2010 calls for the first round of presidential elections together with legislative elections to be held on 27 November 2011, with a second round, if necessary, together with provincial elections, to follow on 26 February 2012. As in 2006, local elections will again be delayed, this time to the second half of 2013, if they are held at all. Local elections are significant in any effort to decentralize governance in the DRC, and they are constitutionally mandated, yet they continue to be postponed and left unfunded.

The calendar itself is already raising the prospect of conflict as it leaves a gap between the end of President Kabila's current mandate and the start of the mandate that will be given to the newly elected president. This and the delays in the handover of responsibilities from the transitional CEI to the post-transition electoral institution, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), risks creating a constitutional crisis, which already is being exploited by spoilers. Unlike in 2006, there is no international mechanism like the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT) to assist the Congolese parties to negotiate a solution out of the crisis. Since the 2006 election, international policy in the DRC has been fragmented and largely bilateral.

Also unlike 2006, the resources likely to be available for the conduct of these elections will be far more limited. The current budget for the 2011 election cycle stands at \$715 million, nearly \$100 million more than the record-setting cost of the 2006 DRC elections. Of that, the DRC government has pledged nearly \$400 million, but it has yet to deliver, and early indications from the international community show that Congo fatigue among donors is real. That, combined with the constraints imposed on treasuries around the world by the global economic recession, means that the international community is unlikely to foot the bill for this election.

The implications of these resource constraints are enormous for MONUSCO, which is committed to providing logistical and technical support for the elections. The recent repatriation of MONUSCO aircraft has already had a major impact on the mission's air mobility and operational capacity. The significance of ensuring credible elections for peace consolidation in the DRC cannot be overstated, and it is crucial that the government of DRC and the international community signal to Congolese voters a strong commitment to democratic principles. Yet the current context of a strong but increasingly unpopular incumbent, a divided opposition, a smaller UN mission with far less capacity, and severe Congo fatigue among donors risks putting the mission in a position of ultimately signing off on a potentially flawed process.

While most discussions surrounding the manner and timing of MONUSCO's drawdown have focused on the security situation and armed conflicts, both domestic and international actors have expressed concern at an increasing trend of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and journalists. Documented by the UN and NGO community alike, this pressure has continued unabated as the country approaches national elections in 2011. Concerns have been raised that as the UN withdraws from the western part of the country, and eventually from the country as a whole, the political space its presence provides for journalists and human rights defenders to operate will diminish.

The UN mission's Radio Okapi is perhaps one of the most significant potential legacies of the mission. Launched in 2002 during the inter-Congolese dialogue in Sun City, Okapi was created to provide the Congolese public with information on the humanitarian situation and political transition. Since then, it has taken up a central role in the DRC's media community, both by providing breaking news from remote areas to the rest of the country and by empowering independent journalists to report on sensitive issues. From its conception, Okapi was intended to outlast the UN mission. However, many questions still surround Okapi's future: how can its continued independence and operation be ensured?

Regional relations in the Great Lakes, for the most part, have improved in the past year. The DRC's rapprochement with Rwanda has been fragile but has persisted and provided some useful avenues for regional cooperation. Relations with Angola, on the other hand, have deteriorated over an ongoing dispute to do with off-shore oil concessions.

The publication in October 2010 of the UN report mapping the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the DRC between 1993 and 2003 strained the Kinshasa-Kigali relationship. The report's findings that Rwanda had committed acts of genocide in the DRC during the course of the Congo wars was met with harsh criticism in Kigali and with a threat to withdraw Rwandan troops from UN peacekeeping operations. Reaction to this landmark report in Kinshasa was mixed. On the one hand, its findings and many of its recommendations were welcomed, but official reaction was muted, lest this destabilize relations with Kigali. Concerns about the impact of the mapping report on regional relations were echoed inside the UN and plagued the official release of the report.

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## Conclusion

The security situation in eastern DRC in particular remains of serious concern. Various coalitions of entrenched armed groups compete over

lucrative natural resources. This situation continues to take its toll on Congolese civilians and also on UN mission personnel. Four peacekeepers and two civilian staff were lost in clashes with armed groups in 2010. Moreover, the Easter Day attack by Enyele insurgents in Mbandaka is a further reminder of the risks to stability elsewhere in the DRC where institutions of state authority are weak. The persistence of human rights abuses by FARDC elements remains one of the greatest sources of insecurity in the country, yet the enforcement of President Kabila's zero-tolerance policy with regard to indiscipline within FARDC ranks remains limited.

While there has been no further discussion of a drawdown of blue helmets, in the environment of the DRC the planning of the mission's stabilization strategy will be a challenge: while the volatile security context has not changed, there has been change to the enabling domestic political situation in which the mission operates. The celebration of Congo's fiftieth anniversary of independence this year and the national elections next year provide an opportunity to begin the difficult conversation about what long-term international engagement in the DRC will look like, post-peacekeeping.