



After the deal: Seizing the opportunity to tackle the root causes of violence and insecurity?

On the 24th February African governments, regional bodies and the UN signed a Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework aiming to resolve the cycles of violence and tackle the root causes of the conflict that has beset eastern Congo for years. We welcome the high level engagement on the crisis, which was sorely lacking at the beginning of the current escalation in the country, and the priority accorded to developing a new framework by the AU, regional governments and organisations, and the UN SG Ban Ki Moon.

Past agreements attempting to restore peace and end insecurity in the region have failed because of a lack of political will to implement them. The new Framework provides a unique opportunity to establish political momentum behind an agreement with oversight mechanisms that can address the problem of implementation. However, while the current Framework and international engagement is a welcome step, it and the processes around it need to be improved in five key ways.

First the Framework is only as good as the actions now taken. A **clear national, regional and international implementation plan with benchmarks must now be developed**, so that progress can be monitored and measured. The implementation plan should not only include the specific issues in the 2013 Framework, but also those commitments made in the 2006 Pact and those drivers of conflict that are not mentioned in the Framework.

Second, the **national oversight mechanism included in the Framework should be strengthened**. The Framework currently provides for the DRC government to monitor its own progress; this lacks transparency and, given the government's failure to meet previous commitments, is unlikely to be adequately robust. Congolese civil society organisations nationally, provincially and locally should be provided space to play a role in monitoring the implementation of the framework and providing accountability. Donors, such as the US, UK, France, Belgium and China, must also play a strong role in supporting and ensuring that progress is made on national commitments, and be prepared to exert public political pressure when necessary, while also improving how aid is given as outlined in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

Third, the **Framework sets the stage for a strategic review of MONUSCO**. As well as ensuring that protection of civilians remains the first priority and is improved, it should explicitly build on the review of the International Stabilisation and Security Strategy, as presented in the annex of the Secretary General's report of 15 February 2013. This includes establishing local political dialogue between communities and between communities and the state to address the causes of conflict and reasons people join and support armed groups. Local dialogue initiatives, supported by MONUSCO, could be linked to an improved and more open national dialogue process.

The strategic review is likely to establish a **dedicated Intervention Brigade** within MONUSCO to neutralise armed groups. While not explicitly mentioned in the framework the force has been a key part of the discussions predating the 24 February announcement. Previous military operations have not successfully eradicated armed groups, but have caused considerable civilian suffering. The FARDC, during unilateral and joint operations, has repeatedly failed to 'hold' zones once they have been cleared, exposing civilians to further rounds of violence when armed groups re-take these areas. This force will need to have a realistic plan for 'holding' areas. The brigade must not only operate within strict

guidelines that respect international humanitarian law and minimise civilian harm, but they must also be sure not to put Congolese men and women's livelihoods at risk. For example, operations should not reduce access to fields during harvest and other critical months to avoid exacerbating food insecurity. The brigade must also not detract from MONUSCO's primary Protection of Civilians capabilities.

Fourth, for the high level **UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes** envisioned by the Framework to be effective, he or she must be someone with both credibility in the region and credibility as a mediator, with the strong backing of both the UNSC and the AU. In order to keep DRC on regional and international agendas, the AUC Chairperson and UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes must increase bilateral engagements with DRC, Rwanda and Uganda with a view to encouraging the respective Heads of States to remain in dialogue to ensure implementation and continue dialogue. The UN Envoy must develop a good working relationship with the SRSB in DRC to ensure that coordination between regional negotiations and operations by MONUSCO takes place.

Finally, the **Congolese national dialogue** is not mentioned in the Framework and Congolese civil society has not been properly consulted on this national debate. The dialogue should provide a forum to address the significant tensions within the country and must include civil society and a range of political parties from across the spectrum. It could take a similar form to the National Sovereign Conference that led to democratisation. Priorities, goals and measurement of success of the Agreement must be based on liaison with female and male members of communities through processes that enable and prioritise their involvement in defining and establishing peace at the local level. Recognising that unless specific provisions are in place for women to express their priorities, and unless women have equal and safe decision-making power in priority setting, outcomes will not directly benefit them.

Notably absent from framework is a reference to the ongoing negotiations in Kampala between the Congolese government and M23 armed group. Any engagement by DRC Government with armed groups must not follow the ad hoc process seen before. At the same time the DRC government should pursue other non-military solutions to M23 and other armed groups, including and especially through demobilisation and reintegration of combatants.

The signing ceremony in Addis must mark the beginning, not the end, of sustained engagement and commitment to break the cycle of violence in the Great Lakes region, in addition to a clear roadmap and the appointment of the UN Special Envoy the following must be done.

- **Civil society engagement in monitoring the implementation of the Framework Agreement and in national dialogue:**
 - Consultations with civil society on the development of the implementation plan, on monitoring the Framework and on the format of the national dialogue must be conducted as matter of priority. This should involve a broad, representative cross section of civil society and be led by a neutral, credible individual
 - Consultations should include women and women's organisations, in line with the DRC national action plan, the Pact and UNSCR 1325
 - Consultations must not be done on an ad hoc basis, but according to a clear calendar. They should result in increasing and systematic involvement of Congolese civil society organisations in monitoring the framework and in national dialogue



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- **Ensuring that the strategic review of MONUSCO prioritises community needs and is truly innovative.**
 - Explicitly build on and adopt the proposals of the ISSSS review
 - Military deployments must respect International Humanitarian and International Human Rights Law and minimise harm to civilians by distinguishing between civilians and military and only using proportionate force
 - Gender training and capacity building must be prioritised with new and existing troops to ensure that MONUSCOs mission to prevent the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.
 - Take account of and respond to the different experiences of insecurity of women and men through community liaison processes which consult with all groups in communities