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Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Subcommittee on African Affairs  
Exploring the U.S. Role in Consolidating Peace and  
Democracy in the Great Lakes Region  
October 24, 2007

I would like to thank you, Chairman Feingold and members of the Committee for inviting me to testify here today on the situation in the African Great Lakes. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the concern and interest you personally have shown by your travel to the region last August. I share your concern that the continuing instability and the recent spike in violence in parts of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has forced hundreds of thousands of Congolese from their homes and many of them to seek refuge in neighboring states. We are keenly aware of the urgency of the situation in eastern Congo, including the potential impact of that situation on Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. I would like to brief you on our efforts to resolve it, including intensive engagement with key regional leaders in the field, in New York during the recent General Debate of United National General Assembly and upcoming discussions here in Washington.

We have a good story to tell. Throughout this administration, we have been actively implementing a strategy for lasting peace in Central Africa. When we started our work, more than six national armies were engaged in a regional war waged on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose population became its greatest victims. Ending that conflict required the direct and sustained effort of President Bush and Secretary Rice, including the President's meeting in 2002 in New York with Presidents Kabila and Kagame, not to mention numerous calls by the Secretary to all of the regional leaders involved in or influential to ending the conflict. We still face many grave challenges in the region today, but I believe today challenges must be considered in the context of how far we have come in our efforts to promote lasting stability in Central Africa.

The United States is committed to end the conflict in Northern Uganda through the Juba peace process and to bring real demonstrable benefits of peace to the people of Uganda.

## REGIONAL BACKGROUND

The road from the regional conflict of 1998-2002 to today is important when we look at the situation in Central Africa. The United States played a key role in the diplomacy that secured the withdrawal of foreign armies from the Democratic Republic of Congo to the current situation in Central Africa. The Lusaka Peace Process, culminating in the Global and Inclusive Agreement – the “Sun City Accord” – provided a framework for the Congo’s transition to democracy. Throughout this process, the United States played a hands-on role. We urged the parties to the peace table and coaxed them to stay there. Our political commitment and our prestige were critical factors in effecting the withdrawal of all foreign occupying armies from the Congo. We took the lead in the United Nations Security Council, and, of course, as one of the largest contributors to the United Nations Mission to the Congo (MONUC). We financed the Joint Verification Commission established under the Lusaka Accord and the Third-Party Verification Mechanism of the 2002 Pretoria Agreement. We provided the initial support to launch the Congolese Independent Election commission. I went to Kinshasa to observe both rounds of national elections and was a member of the Presidential Delegation led by Secretary Chao to President Kabila’s inauguration.

In launching the tripartite process, we initiated confidence-building measures among the former Great Lakes belligerents, and we pledged our lasting commitment to stability and good neighborly relations in the Great Lakes. Relations among the neighbors have come a long way since we organized the first meeting in 2004. Recent visits and meetings among regional leaders from Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda, undertaken without the facilitation of the United States, are a testament to our success in initiating lasting dialogue among former enemies.

Ministers from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda met as the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission in Kampala, Uganda most recently on September 15-17. As usual, the United States Government served as the Facilitator.

The Ministers reaffirmed the core mission of the Tripartite Plus to end the threat to regional peace and security from Negative Forces, and agreed to

redouble efforts to achieve that objective. They agreed on the importance of accelerating integration of Congolese armed forces in order that they may act against Negative Forces and assure the security of the local population. Member delegations appealed to the United Nations Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to intensify efforts to work with Congolese armed forces (FARDC) to eliminate the Negative Forces through full application of its mandate.

All delegations expressed concern about deteriorating security conditions in Eastern Congo, in particular the destabilizing roles of former General Laurent Nkunda and the ex-FAR/Interahamwe. All delegations committed to support the DRC in its efforts to end the violence and reduce the regional security threat of these and other Negative Forces in Eastern Congo.

We welcome the increasing number of high-level bilateral exchanges among Tripartite Plus member countries. These include the September 7-8 summit between DRC President Joseph Kabila and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the September 3-4 visit by Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Dr. Charles Murigande to Kinshasa to meet with his counterpart, the DRC Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi, and meetings of senior officials at many regional fora, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the East African Community (EAC), and the Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL).

I would like to note that The Great Lakes Contact Group, whose members include the European Union (EU), France, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands and the United States, was created to support Tripartite process efforts to normalize regional relations and address the threat of negative forces. We will host the next meeting of the Contact Group in Washington on November 16.

I would also emphasize that our efforts, regionally and through a range of bilateral assistance programs, are focused on building inclusive, democratic, and economically successful countries in the region so as to prevent future conflicts in the regional as well. Even as we work urgently to address the legacies of past conflicts, we continue to give our attention to building democratic institutions and equitable economic growth.

Now, let me speak briefly about Burundi and Rwanda before focusing my remarks on Uganda and the Congo.

## BURUNDI

Our efforts were key in facilitating the peace process in Burundi. There were National Assembly direct elections on July 4, 2005 and Pierre Nkurunziza was elected as President of Burundi on August 19, 2005. Burundi's young democracy recently weathered a parliamentary crisis and overcame a break in negotiations with its one remaining major rebel group. My Deputy James Swan visited Burundi in September to underscore our commitment to the peace process and democratic reform. I met with the Burundian Foreign Minister several weeks ago in New York on the margins of the General Assembly. We welcomed the newly democratic Burundi into the Tripartite Commission, renaming it the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, in September 2005, and have been encouraged by Burundi's performance as a Great Lakes neighbor. As a post-conflict democracy, Burundi is already taking on a larger role in the international community by offering to contribute troops to African Union peacekeeping efforts in Somalia.

## RWANDA

Rwanda has become a very reliable partner in the promotion of economic growth in Central Africa and an important contributor to African peacekeeping. Rwanda has made enormous strides in overcoming the legacy of its devastating 1994 civil war and genocide. Our relationship has helped Rwanda to enhance its security through regional cooperation. We work consistently with the Government of Rwanda to encourage balance among its goals of internal security, democracy, protection of human rights, and economic development. We are encouraged by Rwanda's economic success and take pride in Rwanda's commitment to peacekeeping in Darfur. Assisting the Rwandan Government to bolster its ability to rule justly and fairly, to provide basic services for its people, and to foster economic growth are key U.S. priorities. We support good governance programs and programs that strengthen civil society. The recent adoption of a law expanding the scope for political parties to operate and reforms that address the judiciary's substantial backlog of genocide-related cases, are noteworthy positive developments. Our embassy continues to engage the Government

to build a more constructive relationship with the media. In promoting regional security, our efforts to encourage dialogue among Great Lakes neighbors have paid off in visits between senior officials, including a recent visit of the Rwandan Foreign Minister to Kinshasa. We continue to encourage Rwanda to play a positive role in regional efforts to resolve peacefully the situation in North Kivu. Last week Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Karan K. Bhatia hosted the second high-level meeting under the U.S.-Rwanda Trade and Investment Framework Agreement.

## UGANDA

In Uganda, progress toward peace in recent years has allowed hundreds of thousands of northerners to return to their homes.. Not too long ago, the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, wreaked havoc on the north, and forced millions of northern Ugandans to flee to internally displaced persons camps for peace and security. Prospects for peace were bleak in this conflict, which lasted almost a generation.

I am pleased to be able to report that the Government of Uganda and the LRA have made significant progress in peace talks. The United States has strongly supported this African-led effort, in which the Government of Southern Sudan and former Mozambican President Chissano have played key roles. There is much to be done, but as security has improved under the cessation of hostilities 400,000 formerly displaced people have now returned home. In addition, more are poised to return. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this development for the people of Uganda, and for regional stability in general. Uganda's "peace dividend" is most visible in the north, where my newly-appointed Senior Advisor for Conflict Resolution, Timothy Shortley, recently traveled. Homes are being rebuilt, commerce is starting up, security is present, and hope is evident.

We are not resting. We are committed to working to help the parties conclude the remaining agreements necessary when they resume talks in Juba in the coming weeks. My Senior Advisor for Conflict Timothy Shortley soon will attend the talks in Juba to ensure that our views are taken into account. We are pleased that the Government of Uganda is already taking advantage of the reduction in hostilities to launch the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan, which is designed to address the north's development needs in a systematic, coordinated manner. The Government of Uganda's pledge to provide 30% of all costs associated with the

reconstruction of Northern Uganda is a substantial commitment. But let there be no misunderstanding: the northern Uganda peace process has made an unmistakable difference to the lives and prospects for over a million people. Uganda is a different place than it was only a few years ago. Securing the gains through the successful and timely resolution of the talks and ongoing support for the reconstruction process is absolutely crucial.

The United States has been actively engaged in promoting this progress. I personally traveled to Uganda in early September, and we look forward to welcoming President Museveni for a meeting with President Bush on October 30 to discuss northern Uganda, peace, reconstruction, and development issues, and other bilateral and regional topics.

Fighting in northern Uganda between the Ugandan Government and the LRA has continued for more than 20 years. The LRA terrorized northern Ugandans, forcing as many as 1.8 million to live in internally displaced persons camps for their own protection. Since June 2006, however, the Government of Southern Sudan has been brokering peace talks between the Ugandan Government and the LRA. In late August 2006, the parties agreed to a “cessation of hostilities” to move towards a cease-fire agreement. There have been LRA no attacks in Uganda for more than a year. In 2005, the International Criminal Court indicted five of the top LRA leaders for war crimes, one of whom was subsequently killed in a Ugandan military operation.

The Juba peace talks between the Ugandan Government and the Lord’s Resistance Army are scheduled to resume in early November in Juba, Southern Sudan. The talks, which have faced a number of starts and stops in the past year will resume shortly and continue to provide the best opportunity for all parties involved to bring the 20 year conflict to an end. I have stated repeatedly that the U.S. Government will not support an open-ended peace process, and for this reason, we look forward to the resumption of the peace talks in the coming days. The U.S. Government supports fully the African-led negotiating team, and we will continue to provide them with encouragement and support. We are fully confident in the negotiation team and expect it to continue to make progress. We will continue to stress to all involved that their commitment to the peace process should be full-time.

In October 2005, after being forced out of northern Uganda and southern Sudan, the LRA relocated to Garamba Park in eastern DRC. The

Congolese government has stated that the LRA is not welcome in Garamba Park and should not expect to stay there indefinitely. Cooperation between regional leaders has been and will continue to be a crucial element of ending the conflict.

In northern Uganda, there is regular interaction between U.S. Embassy officials, U.S. Government officials and key participants from the Ugandan government, African observers, donors, and Government of Southern Sudan officials. The U.S. Government has provided expertise and financial support to negotiators from the Government of Uganda, including providing funding for nationwide consultations on accountability and reconciliation. The U.S. Government has worked with the U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas, Joachim Chissano, African observers, and the Ugandan Government to coordinate public messages in support of the peace process. At the request of the Ugandan Government and the Special Envoy, the U.S. Government issued a statement in February expressing support for the Juba venue and Government of Southern Sudan mediator Riek Machar, which helped keep the talks on track.

In August, My Senior Advisor Shortley traveled to Uganda and met with government officials, local leaders, and displaced persons. His trip focused on the Juba talks, the return of displaced people to their areas of origin, and ongoing reconciliation and recovery efforts. He worked to help the parties minimize gaps between their positions, to maximize opportunities in the Juba Peace Process, and to encourage the Ugandan Government to launch its Peace, Recovery, and Development plan. He emphasized the importance of establishing a clear and reasonable timetable for the peace process, and the need to restructure assistance programs to address the needs of people who are returning home. In September, he also accompanied me on my trip to Uganda. We discussed the peace process with Ugandan President Museveni and stressed the need for a speedy peace agreement. Our visits helped explain U.S. policy and our engagement in the region. We were impressed with how the situation is improving.

Our goals and efforts in northern Uganda are to support the African-led peace process between the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Army; ease the effects of the conflict on people in the north; ensure the people of northern Uganda receive the development that conflict

denied them for a generation; and emphasize to all participants that the peace process is not open-ended.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In Congo, as well, there has been dramatic progress in recent years. Congo's historic 2006 elections, the first democratic elections since 1960, represent the best chance in a generation to overcome a legacy of violence and malfeasance and rebuild a nation that has suffered four million deaths in the last ten years.

Because of the multitude of problems the people of the Congo face and the sheer vastness of their country – a nation the size of Western Europe with no more than three hundred miles of paved road – it may be easy for us to lose sight of how far we have come. Indeed, with the Congo we have a great distance yet to go, and it is vital that we remain fully engaged in assisting the Congolese and their international partners in addressing the enormous challenges that remain. What is new, and what we – along with many other friends of Congo – have helped make possible, is a legitimate government democratically elected by the people. We are hopeful that this government will be an effective partner in our efforts to bring, peace, stability and democracy to Central Africa, and a variety of USAID and DRL assistance programs have to goal of assisting in this process.

In order to respond to the current humanitarian and security crisis in eastern Congo, I directed Mr. Shortley to take the lead in expanding and intensifying implementation of our strategy to resolve the crisis in North Kivu. He has met with government officials, UN Organization Mission to DRC (MONUC) political and military leadership, and European partners in the Congo, New York and Washington. Following interagency discussions, we are implementing a plan to promote the extension of state authority and inter-communal dialogue, expand protection efforts for displaced persons and other vulnerable citizens, support the accelerated reintegration of demobilized combatants, and expand U.S presence in the east. We are also expanding our efforts to train Congolese military to uphold human rights and conduct disciplined and effective security operations. This training will underpin diplomatic efforts in the east to neutralize renegade military units and foreign armed groups. Mr. Shortley is departing Friday to return to the DRC where he will meet with senior government officials and travel to the east with MONUC to identify next steps in our diplomatic efforts to bring



peace, stability, and justice to eastern DRC. He will continue on to Rwanda to discuss efforts to neutralize the ex-FAR and Interhamwe.

To accelerate this transformation, at my direction, Embassy Kinshasa is in the process establishing a field presence in Goma. State and USAID personnel are expected to begin the staffing process. The presence of this team on the ground will increase our visibility and effectiveness. It will also provide a staffing level that will allow us to participate as international observers to the GDRC and UN/MONUC's efforts to disarm militias and negative forces in the east. Our approach in the East focuses on four critical areas:

- Extending state authority by strengthening civilian institutions through the decentralization process and preparing for local elections in 2008.
- Supporting a common and more effective approach to Security Sector Reform (SSR) and DDRRR activities, and simultaneously supporting specialized security training for the FARDC (e.g., operational training of the FARDC integrated brigades).
- Promoting inter-communal conflict resolution and supporting provincial and local authorities in eastern Congo to address the protection, social and economic needs of the population.
- Supporting Congolese, UN and civil society efforts to protect vulnerable populations and end impunity, human rights abuses and crimes against humanity in eastern DRC, in particular the epidemic of sexual and gender-based violence.

Congolese President Kabila is visiting the United States this week and will meet with the President on Friday. Ugandan President Museveni will be here next week. Our goal is for these meetings to advance the creation of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Central Africa that can be an engine of growth for the continent.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we must recognize the tremendous progress made in the Great Lakes in recent years as well as the serious challenges that remain.

Active U.S. diplomacy addresses regional aspects of the residual conflicts were well as internal domestic and communal factors. We also have a robust assistance program in the region, which my colleague from USAID will now describe. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you about the critical issues facing the Great Lakes. I will be pleased to respond to your questions.