



Press Statement
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Washington, DC
December 5, 2007

Summary of Conclusions: Tripartite Plus Joint Commission Member States Meeting

The following is a Summary of Conclusions of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission issued in Addis Ababa today.

Begin Text:

1. Senior officials of member states of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, facilitated by the United States of America, met in Addis Ababa on December 4, 2007, to discuss a range of mutual concerns in continuing efforts to achieve lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Representatives of the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of Uganda reaffirmed their common objective to eliminate the threat to regional peace and security posed by the negative forces and agreed to strengthen regional security mechanisms, including the resumption of full diplomatic relations among the four member states.

Ending the Threat from Armed Groups

2. Nairobi Communique

Tripartite Plus member states welcomed and committed to support the November 9 Communique signed in Nairobi between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda. They called for full implementation of this communique that lays out a common approach to ending the threat posed to both Rwanda and the DRC by the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe and recognizes the additional threat posed by other armed groups in the Eastern Congo.

3. Ex-FAR/Interahamwe

Member state delegations welcomed deposition of the general plan of action by the Government of the DRC, according to the deadline established by the Nairobi Communique. They took note of the Congolese Government's intention and determination to end the threat posed by the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe through implementation of the plan, including political/ diplomatic means and accompanying public information and sensitization campaigns, and through military operations planned to begin in mid-March and to be completed with urgency. The member states supported continued collaboration between the governments of the DRC and Rwanda to end this threat. Following the planned operations against the Ex-FAR/Interahamwe and evaluation of their results, the Heads of State are prepared to convene again to consider next steps. Member state delegations urged the United Nations Security Council to pass a specific resolution establishing sanctions against the Ex-Far/Interahamwe as called for by the Nairobi Communique.

4. Irregular Congolese Armed Groups

Tripartite Plus member states expressed their support to the Government of the DRC in its efforts to end the threat posed by irregular Congolese Armed Groups, in particular the forces of General Laurent Nkunda, as noted in the Nairobi Communique. Among the irregular armed groups in Congo are the Mai-Mai, PARECO, and others. Building on the communique between the governments of the DRC and Rwanda, the four delegations agreed to strengthen border controls to prevent illicit cross-border movement of combatants or recruits and to refrain from aiding and abetting any armed group. Member delegations condemned the resumption of hostilities in North Kivu and called on all troops of dissident General Nkunda to, without delay, either join the process of DDR or to integrate within the Congolese armed forces according to modalities determined by the Government of the DRC.

5. Joint Verification Commission

Delegations of the Tripartite Plus member states welcomed the commitment of the DRC and Rwanda to reestablish and make operational quickly the Joint Verification Commission (JVC) established by the two governments to investigate reported security transgressions. The United States of America accepted the invitation of the two parties to participate in the JVC.

6. Ngurdoto-Tanzania Agreement

Delegations welcomed the Ngurdoto-Tanzania Agreement signed on 8 September 2007 between the Uganda and DRC but expressed concern about the delay in its implementation. They agreed that issues which need urgent action to be immediately implemented as a priority and the Joint Permanent Commission, which is due to convene from 12 to 15 December 2007 in Uganda, to work out implementation mechanisms for the rest of the Agreement.

7. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Tripartite member states noted the continued threat of other negative forces in eastern Congo, in particular the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). They commended the Government of the DRC for its active collaboration with the Government of Uganda for the return of certain LRA leaders in Uganda and encouraged the Government of the DRC to continue its efforts in this regard. They urged the LRA to be committed to Juba negotiations so that a peaceful settlement can be quickly concluded, stressing that these talks must not continue indefinitely. They called on the LRA to implement previous agreements, including its agreement to leave the Congo and assemble at Rikwangba in southern Sudan. Should the Juba peace process not have concluded successfully by January 31, 2008, the Government of the DRC reaffirms its September 8, 2007 commitment at Arusha, under which they shall take more firm action against the LRA in consultation with the Government of Uganda.

8. Other Armed Groups

Member state senior officials noted the continued threat to the region by other armed groups operating in eastern Congo, including ADF/NALU, and urged the government of DRC and MONUC to hasten efforts to disarm them. They urged the United Nations Security Council to pass a specific resolution establishing sanctions against such groups.

9. Palipehutu-FNL

The Tripartite Plus member states deplored and condemned the repeated cease-fire violations by the Palipehutu-FNL and its stubborn and unjustified refusal to resume

its participation in the work of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM). They urged the Palipehutu-FNL to halt unconditionally its violations of the accords and to resume its participation in the work the Joint Commission immediately.

Delegations recalled the deadline of December 31, 2007, determined by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and supported by the regional initiative for Burundi and the United Nations for completing implementation of the cease-fire accords.

Should this deadline pass, the Governments of the Tripartite Plus countries undertake to apply the following measures with respect to the leaders of the Palipehutu-FNL:

- Prohibition on entering and circulating within the territory of the Tripartite Plus member states;
- Adopting every possible measure to eliminate all sources of weapons, ammunition, and funding;
- Denial of refuge;
- Freezing of accounts and assets;
- Refusal to issue visas and to grant access to the media;
- Revival of the most-wanted list with respect to Palipehutu-FNL leaders;
- Arrest and extradition.

10. Joint Planning Cell

In order to prepare for and coordinate military action against negative forces, member states welcomed regular meetings of the Chiefs of Defense staff and the provision of intelligence to the Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell. They also supported the recommendation of their Chiefs of Defense staff to establish a Joint Planning Cell (JPC) with a view to facilitating the elaboration of common strategies in the region, with strict respect for the sovereignty of each member state. Delegations decided that the Chiefs of Defense Staff (CHODS) should prepare at their next meeting in January a detailed plan for establishment of this cell for presentation to the ministers at the next meeting of the Tripartite Plus. They further agreed that the CHODS, in consultation with the Facilitator, recommend how best to integrate the Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell with the JPC.

11. Political and Diplomatic Measures

Tripartite Plus member states expressed their support for the DRC initiative to organize a Round Table on peace and security in the Kivus. They agreed on the importance of taking measures to reassure all affected populations and of promoting their peaceful cohabitation.

12. MONUC

Senior officials of Tripartite Plus member states urged the United Nations Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to play an active role in the refinement and then implementation of the Congolese general plan of action dated November 30. To this end they requested that the United Nations Security Council authorize MONUC to conduct offensive operations against negative forces.

Regional Security Architecture

13. Diplomatic Relations

Taking note of the Tripartite Plus Ministerial decision of September 17, 2007, the delegations committed to full normalization of diplomatic relations among all member countries in those cases in which member governments have not yet exchanged ambassadors. They agreed that their governments shall take the steps necessary to implement this commitment.

14. Strengthening Existing Regional Contacts

Member state delegations agreed on the need to develop and institutionalize a process to carry forward efforts to ensure regional peace and stability, including holding regular meetings of security and other officials of the four countries and retaining such mechanisms as the Joint Verification Mechanisms, the Tripartite Plus Fusion Cell, and a Joint Planning Cell, until such time the member states collectively determine they are no longer necessary.

15. International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

Senior Tripartite Plus officials confirmed that each of their governments had ratified the "Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Regions" signed in December 2006 by the 11 member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and agreed to complete the legal steps required for depositing instruments of ratification to the ICGLR Secretariat in Bujumbura. They also agreed to cooperate in fully implementing this pact.

16. Refugee Return

Member state delegations affirmed the importance of voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin when appropriate conditions are established. They endorsed the September Tripartite Plus agreement of their Foreign Ministers for the DRC to establish tripartite commissions with UNHCR and each of the other Tripartite Plus members states.

17. Final Remarks

Member state delegations decided that their ministers of foreign affairs, who are scheduled to meet in late February at the next Tripartite Plus Joint Commission in Bujumbura, would monitor these decisions and ensure their implementation. The Tripartite Plus representatives expressed their appreciation to the Government and People of Ethiopia for their warm hospitality during their stay.

2007/1099

Released on December 5, 2007

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