



Activity Report

April 2009 to March 2010

This report outlines the activities of the APPG on the Great Lakes region of Africa during the period April 2009 - March 2010, to span the '09-'10 financial year. The period captured has been brought into line with the APPG's financial reporting period.

Also annexed (Annex 1), a brief overview of the APPG's activities between April 2010 – November 2010. A full activity report for the period April 2010 – March 2011 will be published in April 2011.

Despite May's General Election, APPG Members remained heavily engaged in the Group's work in the run up to the poll. Details of changes to APPG Membership will be outlined in our next Activity Report, but we are pleased to report that the group suffered only minor losses in terms of our Membership and that we continue to attract new Members as the new session runs on (see Annex 2).

For reasons of space we have omitted from this report complete coverage of many of our routine but important parliamentary activities that provide parliamentarians with an accurate and timely picture of the region, such as weekly news bulletins (Annex 3), day-to-day briefings for members and regular communication exchanges with individuals on the ground in the region.

From January 2010, the Congo Now coalition recruited a dedicated Coordinator, and so this report does not cover activities associated with the coordination of the Congo Now campaign, which the APPG had provided up until that date. However, the APPG remains highly engaged in the coordination and running of the campaign and will continue to provide support where appropriate.

The content of this report is split into four main sections: (1) activity within the formal structures of parliament (debates, questions, etc.), (2) an outline of formal correspondence, (3) brief listing of meetings and events, and (4) operational issues. The final budget for financial year April 2009- March 2010 is also listed (Annex 4).

During the run-up to the UK general election, we continued to brief Members, focusing particularly on those with what were considered to be safe seats, and on prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) with a proven interest in the Great Lakes region. These efforts have yielded fruits: although the APPG has, inevitably, lost a proportion of Members following the General Election, we remain an exceptionally well-supported Group with more than 160 Members across the two Houses, more than twenty five of whom have newly joined the APPG since the General Election. An up-to-date list of our Members can be viewed here: <http://www.appggreatlakes.org/index.php/about-the-appg-mainmenu-43/191-members-of-the-appg>

The continued efforts of the Group to keep Great Lakes issues at the fore of parliamentary consideration have contributed to the considerable understanding of Great Lakes issues established amongst our Members. Parliamentary interest in the region remains high, even after the election. We have maintained a constant dialogue, both formally and informally, with outgoing and current Ministers (further details in next year's Activity Report). The APPG will continue to apply parliamentary pressure and work to build on the foundations built during the previous parliamentary session.

Selected highlights in this report include:

- **Visit of six Congolese *Députés Nationaux*** from our sister grouping in the DRC Parliament, the Congo-UK Friendship Group
- **Series of meetings with Members and UK Ambassador to DRC, Neil Wigan, before the Ambassador took up post in Kinshasa, to discuss current situation in DRC, Members' concerns and UK policy**
- **Ministerial meeting with then Foreign Office Minister of State, Baroness Kinnock,** to discuss the region with a particular focus on eastern DRC, MONUC and the LRA
- **Reconvening of the Joint Working Group on the OECD Guidelines Mechanism,** consisting of key actors from civil society, the law, international business, and the APPG, leading to a formal submission to the government on changes to pursue in the current review of the Guidelines themselves
- **Meetings with Alan Doss,** the outgoing UN Secretary-General's Special Representative to the DRC, for APPG Members and civil society
- **Meeting with Members and the new Rwandan High Commissioner in the UK and the High Commission's first political secretary**

Parliamentary activity

A major accomplishment for the Group was the passage of the Coroners and Justice Bill – this legislation contains clauses reforming UK laws for the prosecution of individuals in the UK suspected of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The APPG was heavily involved in this campaign along with the Aegis Trust and others – loopholes in legislation meant that those who are suspected of these crimes before the passage of the International Criminal Court Act could not be tried in UK courts. **Members of the APPG introduced amendments to the Coroners and Justice Bill** in the House of Lords which were accepted by the Government backdating the provisions of the ICC Act to 1990. When the legislation comes into force in the first quarter of 2010, these provisions will allow, for example, for four Rwandans suspected of involvement in the 1994 Rwandan genocide to face trial in the UK courts. The Coroners and Justice Act was sent for Royal Assent on 12 November 2009. The campaign for these amendments, led by the Aegis Trust, was short listed for the *Liberty/Justice Human Rights Prize of the Year 2009*.

During the **Queen’s Speech Debate** on foreign affairs and defence in the House of Lords on 19 November 2009, several members of the APPG raised issues affecting the region. Issues raised included: parliamentary strengthening specifically in Uganda, the future of MONUC and its effectiveness, LRA activities across the region, sexual violence in the DRC, corruption and political space in DRC, as well as the upcoming elections across the region, the draft LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Bill currently in the US congress, and relations between Rwanda and the DRC. The full Hansard of the debate is available online (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/lhan2.pdf>).

On 23 November, APPG member Lord Chidgey asked a short question in the House **“to ask Her Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made on Rwanda’s progress towards meeting the Commonwealth’s shared core values”**. During the supplementary debate on this question Peers raised issues relating to the recommendations in the EU Election Observer Mission to the 2008 legislative elections in Rwanda, human rights, press freedom, and those suspected of involvement in the 1994 genocide living in the United Kingdom with reference to the legislative change mentioned above. The full Hansard of this exchange is available online (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/lhan3.pdf>).

On 7 January 2010, there was a *Question for Short Debate* in the House of Lords “to draw attention to recent developments in Sudan”. Members of the APPG used this opportunity to **address the issue of the LRA, and the regional threat it poses**. Members also drew attention to the risks posed to the Great Lakes region if the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Southern Sudan were to break down. Members again raised the issues of a better coordinated approach to apprehension of the LRA, including a strengthened diplomatic as well as military solution, and to the US draft LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Bill and asked if the government would consider taking similar measures. The full Hansard of this debate is available online (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/lhan21.pdf>)

During the Christmas Adjournment debate in the House of Commons on 16 December 2009, where Members are able to raise any issues of concern: APPG Chair, Eric Joyce MP, **raised the draft Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda** drawing attention in his speech to the way it had been reported by the BBC and other news agencies. Several members agreed and condemned the draft Ugandan legislation in the Chamber. There have subsequently been a number of Written Parliamentary Questions asked on this issue, and an EDM has been tabled which has received over 80 signatures (<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40154&SESSION=903>). We have also raised this issue with the **Ugandan High Commissioner in London**.

On 3 February 2010 a **full debate on the DRC**, led by Lord Chidgey, took place in the House of Lords. During the debate in which six peers took part, all of whom are APPG members, a wide range of issues were discussed. In his response the Minister, Lord Brett speaking on behalf of Baroness Kinnock who was overseas, noted that Peers had put some 47 questions on the DRC to the Government in just one hour – all of which will be responded to in writing as he could not provide an answer to all of the points raised in the time allowed. The timing of the debate was very opportune, coming just a couple of weeks before Baroness Kinnock was due to visit the DRC. The full Hansard of the debate is available online (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100203-gc0001.htm#10020383000113>). The APPG will continue to work to push Burundi further up the political agenda and will take measures to get a full debate on Burundi in the House, although this will most likely take place following the General Election in May 2010.

On 11 February 2010 APPG Eric Joyce MP spoke in a Westminster Hall Debate on Conflict Prevention and asked highlighted concerns raised in the 2009 UN Group of Experts report on the DRC, as well as

issues surrounding the mandate of UN Peacekeeping operation, MONUC, see <http://tinyurl.com/36yg9bd>

Before Parliament rose for the election, APPG Members tabled several Early Day Motions (EDMs). These are detailed here:

EDM 528 (Eric Joyce MP)

This House welcomes Rwanda's entry into the Commonwealth as its 54th Member State and the decision of Commonwealth leaders to accept Rwanda's application; recognises the remarkable progress Rwanda has made since the 1994 genocide; supports Rwanda's commitment to continue working towards complete realisation of all Commonwealth values; and hopes that membership will accelerate and enhance that progress.

EDM 575 (Harry Cohen MP)

That this House calls on the British Government and the European Union to press the government of Uganda not to proceed with the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which violates the equality and non-discrimination provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter of Human and People's Rights; abhors that this Bill, currently before the Uganda parliament, proposes the death penalty for repeat homosexual acts, extends the existing penalty of life imprisonment for anal intercourse to all other same-sex behaviour, including the mere touching of another person with the intent to have homosexual relations and imposes life imprisonment for contracting a same-sex marriage; notes that under the provisions of the Bill membership of providing funding for gay organisations advocating gay human rights and providing condoms or safer sex advice to gay people will result in a sentence of between five and seven years for promoting homosexuality and that a person in authority who fails to report offenders to the police within 24 hours will incur a three year prison sentence; further notes that this monstrous proposed law contains extra-territorial jurisdiction so that it will apply to Ugandans who breach its provisions whilst living abroad, even in countries where such behaviour is not a criminal offence, and that such Ugandans living overseas could be subject to extradition, trial and punishment in Uganda; and demands that the Ugandan government uphold international humanitarian law by abandoning the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, decriminalising same-sex acts between consenting adults in private, and outlawing discrimination against gay people.

EDM 912 (Chris Mullin MP)

That this House notes that corruption in the oil, gas and mining industries has caused great human misery in Africa and other developing regions; considers that corruption would be curbed by full disclosure of revenue payments to governments by oil, gas and mining companies; further notes that the United States Congress is considering a law to require all such companies regulated in the US to fully disclose such payments; and urges the Government to consider similar legislation.

Correspondences with HMG

On 13 October 2009, APPG Chair, Eric Joyce MP, wrote to US Ambassador to the UK, Ambassador Susman, to express his concerns over the resurgence of sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC. This letter was copied to Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and US Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, Harold Wolpe. The content of this letter was also raised with Ambassador Wolpe when he made an informal visit to the APPG in February 2010.

On 4 November 2009, six Members of the APPG wrote to Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for Africa, Baroness Kinnock, on the **Lords Resistance Army and the possibility of instability across the Great Lakes region**. The letter makes reference to further reports of LRA splinter groups; threats posed by a breakdown of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan; the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Bill in the US; and asks what commitments HMG can make to extract Kony and neutralise the threat posed by the LRA to civilians and to regional stability as a whole. Baroness Kinnock's response is annexed here (Annex 6); much of the content has been followed up by further questions in the House of Lords and is covered later in this report.

As part of the APPG's considerable lobbying effort on military operations in eastern DRC, Eric Joyce MP wrote on 16 November 2009 to the Foreign Secretary to **raise concerns about Operation Kimia II**. The letter made a series of policy focused points including: the need for a strengthened political approach towards the FDLR, a systematic effort to remove outside support to the rebels, particularly to those individuals located in the UK and Europe, a more effective and controlled military strategy, and a renewed high-level effort for coordinated and resourced security sector reform (see response to this letter; Annex 7).

In November 2009, Eric Joyce MP wrote to Baroness Kinnock on the issue of the **upcoming presidential election in Rwanda**. In the letter he raised concerns following Rwanda's previous parliamentary elections; the EU Observation Mission had raised some significant concerns, as well as reports of manipulation not covered by the EUEOM. He asked what the government were doing to see that the EUEOM's recommendations were implemented ahead of the next election, and also asked HMG to exert pressure on the European Commission so that the upcoming elections are properly observed by a full EU mission. Baroness Kinnock responded to this letter (see Annex 8).

In February 2010 Eric Joyce MP and Lord Chidgey wrote to Members of the Commonwealth Secretariat to highlight similar concerns r.e. Rwanda's August election and also to raise the issue of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill. A response from Amitav Banerji, Director of the Commonwealth's Political Affairs Division, is annexed here (see Annex 9). Eric Joyce MP raised these points also with the High Representative, Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton and specifically asked to be informed whether the EU intended to send a full – or indeed any - EOM to cover Rwanda's Presidential elections. Catherine Ashton's response is annexed here (Annex 10).

In anticipation of a review of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the APPG has continued to convene a **Joint Working Group** comprised of representatives from NGOs and industry. Discussions focussed on the key areas in need of review and expansion. These key areas centred on facilitating legitimate activity through better guidance on human rights provision, particularly with regard to due diligence and supply chains. Subsequently and in response to the UK National Contact Point's request for submissions on the review of the Guidelines, the Joint Working Group produced a substantive document on suggested improvements. This report was submitted with the support of NGOs and industry representatives to the UK NCP in November 2009.

Members of the **APPG signed their names to a joint letter from members of the Congo Now coalition**, which was published in the Guardian newspaper to coincide with the 100th anniversary of a protest outside the Royal Albert Hall on the DRC, see <http://congonow.org/home/36-congo-news/48-letter-to-the-guardian.html>

In February 2010, Eric Joyce MP wrote to several Ministers and key politicians, drawing their attention to the Congo Now campaign and in particular inviting them to become more involved in the campaign and to attend the 9 July Congo Now event at the Southbank Centre. The APPG received responses from several Ministers, including Ministers of State Baroness Kinnock and Douglas Alexander (see Annexes 11 and 12).

In Spring 2010 APPG Members Norman Lamb MP, Chris Mullin MP and Elliot Morley MP wrote to Ministers of State Baroness Kinnock and Gareth Thomas MP to highlight various concerns pertaining to the management of natural resources across the Great Lakes region. Norman Lamb MP made particular reference to the recent Panel of Experts Report on the Illegal Exploitation of Resources in the DRC, Elliot Morley MP outlined concerns over transparency and supply chain management and Chris Mullin wrote to highlight concerns over management of oil, gas and mining contracts signed

between UK companies and the governments of developing countries. The letters are annexed here, and the Ministerial response to Chris Mullin's letter is also attached (Annexes 13a/b/c)

Finally, in response to Lord Chidgey's full debate on DRC (3 February, as detailed in this report, above) the APPG received a complete written response to questions raised by Members of the House of Lords during the debate. Lord Chidgey also followed up with a letter to Baroness Kinnock, immediately following the debate's event, to request specific responses to many of the issues left unanswered by the responding Minister. Both Baroness Kinnock's and Lord Brett's responses are annexed here (Annexes 14 and 15).

Meetings and events

Hosting Key Visitors from the Region

In early January 2010, the APPG **hosted a visiting cross-party delegation of six Congolese MPs**. The delegation was formed by our sister grouping in the Congolese parliament, the *Congo-UK Friendship Group* and was funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The purpose of the visit was to give the delegates a flavour of the workings of parliament in the UK, with a specific focus on how our MPs hold government to account, scrutinise legislation and how transparency mechanisms work across Westminster. The visit also aimed to strengthen existing relations between the two parliaments. Among other things, during the three-day programme the delegation: met with DFID minister Gareth Thomas, spent time shadowing APPG members in the Commons and Lords, spoke with the Government Whips and key MPs from the main political parties including Shadow Ministers, the Editor of Hansard, the Registrar at the Parliamentary Commission for Hansard, watched the proceedings of an International Development Committee evidence session, met the Speakers of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, watched Prime Minister's Questions, and participated in an in-depth policy roundtable with members of the APPG. This visit was useful both to the delegation and members of the APPG. Since returning to Kinshasa, the members of the delegation have done press work (see for example <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/medard-mulangala-lwakabwanga>) and have been sharing their experiences with parliamentary colleagues. The visit has been well publicised in the Kinshasa parliament, and is the first visit by any Congolese Friendship Group to their partner country. A copy of the final Friendship Group report is annexed here (Annex 16).

On 11 November 2009, **members had the opportunity to meet Mathilde Muhindo**, during her visit to the UK organised by Human Rights Watch. Mathilde is a well known human rights defender in eastern Congo who has worked particularly hard to assist women affected by sexual violence. She also held a seat in the transitional National Assembly before the 2006 election. She was in London to accept the *Human Rights Watch Alison Des Forges Award for Exceptional Activism*. Discussion covered issues such as the effect of Operation Kimia II on civil society activity and the civilian population, the UN comprehensive strategy to combat sexual violence, and the issues human rights defenders face in the DRC. Minutes and key recommendations raised from this meeting were circulated to APPG members. The APPG follows human rights cases across the region closely and had recently drawn attention to cases such as that of Serge Maheshe, Golden Misabiko and Juvenal Rududora.

In early December Christian Aid facilitated a **visit of their church partners, who have long been involved in peaceful talks with FDLR rebels in eastern Congo**. The APPG has consistently advocated for the door for a political dialogue with the FDLR and other rebel groups to be kept open. As part of the delegation's programme, several one-to-one meetings with various members of the APPG took place. Many Members have since followed-up on these discussions through contributions in both Houses. The delegation gave members a current and first hand insight to discussions held by the Church leaders on the ground in eastern DRC, and underlined the importance of keeping these avenues open.

Over the reporting period, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative to the DRC, Alan Doss, visited the UK in November 2009, as part of a short tour of European capitals. During his visits, **Mr. Doss came to parliament to meet with Members of the APPG**. Members had detailed conversations on the current situation in the Congo including the situation in the Kivus and LRA affected areas. Members also focused their discussion onto the future of MONUC and its role, as well as taking a look forward to the 2011 elections. A detailed record of this meeting has been circulated to all parliamentary members of the APPG. The APPG also facilitated a meeting between the Special Representative and UK civil society organisations.

Over the summer recess in 2009 the APPG coordinated a one-day **visit to Westminster for Domitien Ndayizeye, former President of Burundi**. As part of the programme Mr. Ndayizeye met with parliamentarians including the Shadow International Development Minister, Andrew Mitchell MP, as well as meeting with UK based NGOs and the Director for Africa at the Foreign Office. During the visit, Mr. Ndayizeye consistently raised three issues relating to Burundi's upcoming election which the APPG has been following since: the need for all levels of elections to be properly observed, the existence of a parallel electoral authority within the Interior Ministry duplicating the functions of the National Independent Electoral Commission, and the presence of youth militia groups in the country which could threaten the planned election process.

Maintaining Contacts with Great Lakes Officials

The APPG continued to keep in regular contact with government officials from countries in the region over the reporting period. In connection with the visit of Mr. Ndayizeye, in October 2009 **members of the APPG met with Burundi's Ambassador to Brussels** (who also serves as the country's representative to the UK). Members raised points of concern about Burundi's elections,

and various other issues, with the Ambassador. The APPG has welcomed the EU's intention to deploy a full observation mission to Burundi. We have subsequently launched the report of our mission to Burundi earlier in 2009 and will continue to advocate the recommendations contained within it. The full report is available on our website (<http://tinyurl.com/yeubb3b>). The APPG continues to maintain regular contact with parliamentarians and key members of civil society in Burundi and briefs members regularly on issues raised through these channels.

Upon the arrival of the new Congolese Ambassador to the UK, Mr Barnabe Kikaya Bin Karubi, our Chair wrote to welcome The Ambassador to his new post. APPG Executive Members have subsequently met with the Ambassador in the House of Commons and have since received a **visit from the Congolese Foreign Minister, Alexis Thambwe Mwamba**, during which members held discussions on the future of MONUC, conflict in the east of DRC, apprehension of Joseph Kony, a more coordinated security sector reform effort and the COP-15 talks in Copenhagen. During this parliamentary term we expect visits from other senior members of the Congolese government.

On 16 November, along with the All Party Groups on Genocide Prevention and the UN, we hosted a **public talk followed by a question and answer session with Dr. Francis Deng, UN Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention**. In his talk, Dr. Deng addressed issues surrounding the development of the responsibility to protect and how these can be brought further into practice. A full record of this event is available on our website, and an audio recording is available on request.

In early December, **Members met with Mr. Puis Bigirimana, Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Ugandan Prime Minister**. During our discussions with Mr. Bigirimana we mainly covered issues to do with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, on which he is one of the leading figures in the Ugandan Government. We also covered the controversial issue of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Although, as a civil servant Mr. Bigirimana could not comment on the content of the draft legislation, APPG Members asked him to send a very clear message back to the Ugandan Prime Minister that the bill had provoked a lot of negative feeling in Westminster, and in the view of Members is completely unacceptable. If the Bill is to pass into law, there would be strong representation from Members for HMG to react firmly.

As part of our continued interest in issues of reconciliation, political space and democracy in Rwanda, the Group engaged **with relevant actors including FCO, DFID, the Rwandan embassy and with parties wishing to register for the forthcoming Rwandan presidential election**. The APPG

Secretariat met with UK representatives of Ms. Victoire Umuhoza, leader of the United Democratic Forces-Inkingi party recently returned to Rwanda, and was in touch with other non-coalition opposition-party leaders in the run-up to elections. The APPG Secretariat continued to monitor progress of the election closely and consistently raised concerns with representatives from the Foreign Office and others where appropriate. Following receipt of information that the European Union was not intending to send an election observation mission to monitor Rwanda's presidential election, we wrote to Baroness Ashton, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, urging the European Commission to reconsider this decision. APPG Members also wrote to the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth following his visit to Kigali, raising concerns relating to the upcoming election.

On 30 April 2010, The APPG also had an opportunity to meet with the new Rwanda High Commissioner in the United Kingdom and the High Commission's first political secretary. The APPG received an update on government's preparations for the upcoming elections this year. Members of the Group also raised concerns with the High Commissioner about the arrest and expulsion of human rights activists and the need to maintain an open and free political and media space.

Raising Awareness at Home

In March 2009, the APPG began work with a group of NGOs and a team from London's Southbank Centre to organise a week of events in May 2009 - as well as a longer term awareness raising initiative - called *Congo Now*. The APPG co-hosted a major event held in the Purcell Room of the Southbank Centre on 7 May 2009, which in turn began a continuing campaign on the Congo. The campaign going forwards will build upon events in 2009 to create a coordinated series of public and parliamentary events in 2010, marking the DR Congo's fiftieth anniversary of independence.

Operational issues

Since last Autumn 2009, the *Open Society Institute* have come on board as a new funding partner for the APPG, as our joint largest contributor. This has allowed us to redress the shortfall in our staffing budget for 2009 - 10, bringing it more into line with the capacity of the current APPG secretariat. However, there remains a clear gap between the capacity and expertise needed to enable the APPG to fulfil its potential, and the staffing and operational budgets we have available. We have been able to cover this in the past, but only by making some significant demands on the goodwill of staff, several of whom work on a semi-voluntary basis. In the long term, this is not sustainable. It is also felt that it is important to build a small operational reserve from the APPG to cover times where cash flow is problematic, which has in the past resulted in salaries going unpaid or paid late.

In addition to the core budget we have received a small project grant from the *Inter Parliamentary Union* which contributed to FCO funding for the visit of the Congo-UK Friendship Group. Attached to this report is an amended budget for the financial year 2009/10, and a projected budget for 2010/11 (Annex 4).