

Think Regionally, Act Practically

An EU regional approach for the Great Lakes,
Africa

**Position Paper
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EURAC: Identity and mission

Preamble

In response to the instability and conflict which has affected Central Africa for more than ten years (democratic process and civil war in Burundi, genocide in Rwanda, international and local conflicts in DRC costing the lives of many people), European non governmental organizations working for peace and development seek to coordinate and work together on advocacy, information sharing and support for partners on the ground.

Identity and Mission

In view of the regional dimension of both the problems and the solutions, EURAC members have decided to adopt a resolutely regional approach to their work in Central Africa. EURAC's members are actively involved with local populations and civil society in the sub-region in a variety of fields such as development, human rights and humanitarian assistance in response to certain emergency situations.

As European associations, EURAC members share a common vision and objective, namely of achieving greater coherence by the European Union and member states' towards the region and lobbying for donor policy to be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the region's populations, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Furthermore, EURAC members share the same concept of development and partnership. They want to challenge the structural causes of under development of populations and support and accompany local initiatives. The identification, implementation and evaluation of development initiatives by EURAC and its members led by their local partners and the local populations they represent.

Executive Summary

This EURAC position paper is an appeal to the European Union and member states to adopt a regional policy for the promotion of peace and development in the Great Lakes region, whose populations have suffered from widespread violence, severe poverty, malnutrition and human rights violations. After more than ten years of conflict, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi are among the least developed countries in the world. Although peace agreements have been signed in both Burundi and the DRC, and the Rwandan process for the transition to democracy was formally concluded in 2003, the peace process in each of the countries remains fragile and is still to be fully consolidated. EURAC firmly believes that it is time to urgently recognize the need for a strong, coherent and lasting commitment by the EU and its member states, rooted in a regional strategy, to help the Great Lakes region to build a better future.

A regional policy for the Great Lakes region is necessary because the causes of poverty and conflict in the three countries are strongly interlinked. Further more, a regional policy by donors should be developed to avoid that intensive bilateral relations with some countries in the region and not others, results in an unbalanced and incoherent policy. An EU regional policy is also needed to ensure greater coherence and coordination between the donor policies of member states.

EURAC firmly believes that a regional policy by the EU and member states should be developed to address regional issues by:

- Developing more balanced aid policies towards the region,
- Increasing the use of regional funds and instruments and increasing support to organizations and
- Promoting regional cooperation between the countries in the region.

The aim of presenting this position paper to the current Dutch EU presidency, as well as the European Commission and European Parliament, is to press the EU:

- To negotiate a *Common Position* under the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU on the need for a regional policy to solving the conflicts in the Great Lakes.
- To negotiate an agreement on an EU *Common Strategy* for the Great Lakes, which should provide an in-depth analysis of the conflicts and a workable framework for intensifying efforts towards a regional policy.
- To formulate *regional benchmarks* to be applied in aid relations with the different countries in the Great Lakes
- To ensure the full participation of civil society organizations during the *UN International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes*, which might be held at the end of 2004.

EURAC has identified the following priority regional issues: 1) Peace and security; 2) Justice, governance and the rule of law; and 3) Economic governance, and has formulated a set of recommendations on these issues, calling for greater efforts to: promote grassroots peace building; improve the DDRRR process; introduce measures to tackle the arms trade in the region; strengthen UN peace missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi; promote democracy and the rule of law; fight impunity and promote the empowerment of civil society and the building of a peace economy to replace the war economy.

Chapter I

Towards a regional policy

1. Background

This position paper by EURAC is an appeal to the European Union to adopt a regional approach for the promotion of peace and development in the Great Lakes region, whose populations have suffered from widespread violence, severe poverty, malnutrition and human rights violations. After more than ten years of conflict, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi are among the least developed countries in the world.¹ EURAC firmly believes that it is time to urgently recognize the need for a strong, coherent and lasting commitment by the EU and its member states, rooted in a regional strategy, to help the Great Lakes region to build a better future.

The regional approach has gradually been accepted by the donor community as a necessary principle for effective policy.² However, the EU has not yet adopted a regional policy within its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In addition, the regional approach still lacks operational and concrete proposals. Through this position paper, EURAC presents a set of regional policy recommendations to the EU, its member states, the Dutch EU presidency, as well as the European Commission and European Parliament.

EURAC believes that the development of a regional policy is crucial for the following reasons:

1. Ethnic, linguistic and economic ties between the countries have deep roots in the region's history. The economic and social situation is similar across the three countries, and the causes of poverty and conflict are strongly interlinked. Instability easily spills over national boundaries. Consequently, efforts to solve the region's problems are bound to fail if they do not take into account such cross-border dynamics. The success of national efforts towards peace and reconciliation will depend heavily on progress made towards finding regional solutions.
2. Some donor countries work in only one or two of the countries in the Great Lakes and have tended not to take into account the impact of the military, economic and diplomatic policies of the recipient countries on neighboring states. Intensive bilateral relations with only some countries in the region have resulted in unbalanced and incoherent donor policy.
3. To date, EU policy for the Great Lakes has amounted to little more than a sum of bilateral policies of its member states, which were not coherent and sometimes even contradictory. A regional policy for the Great Lakes on a European level should increase this coherence.

¹ The three countries are listed as numbers 158, 167 and 171 on the Human Development Index of the UNDP (Human Development Report 2003) respectively.

² The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) of the World Bank uses a regional approach; The Netherlands, EU president in the period 1 July – 31 December 2004, have adopted a regional policy memorandum for the Great Lakes; and the UN intends to organize an International Conference on Peace, Democracy, Good Governance and Development in the Great Lakes, with a regional perspective. The EU has a special representative to the region, Mr. Aldo Ajello; and the OECD has established an 'Initiative pour l'Afrique Centrale', INICA.

2. *A regional policy by the EU and Member States should seek to achieve the following:*

1. Address regional issues (for example natural resources, conflict, refugees) by developing more balanced policies towards countries in the region. Similar issues are then to be addressed in a contextualized but similar way in the three different countries. This also means that political dialogue should be based on the same regional principles and have a similar intensity with all countries in the region.
2. Address regional issues through regional funds, instruments or regional organizations. An example would be the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) by the World Bank, covering the entire region surrounding the DRC.
3. Promoting regional cooperation between the countries in the region, on the level of states but also civil societies. Examples could be regional economic integration, environmental projects in border areas, exchanges between universities, etc.

Recommendations to the EU and its member states:

1. The EU should negotiate a *Common Position* under the CFSP of the EU on the need for a regional approach to solving the conflict in the Great Lakes.
2. Based on this Common Position, the EU should agree on a *Common Strategy* on the Great Lakes region. The EU Common Strategy should:
 - a) Provide a robust and in-depth analysis of the conflicts and socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the region, recognizing the regional and cross-border nature of conflict in the region;
 - b) Provide a framework for intensifying efforts towards a regional policy, both within the European Commission and among member states;
3. To intensify cooperation and coordination, involving the most committed EU states to the Great Lakes, to facilitate the establishment of a coherent EU regional policy for the Great Lakes.

3. Benchmarking aid relations

The UK, the Netherlands and Sweden have bilaterally agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rwanda, which sets out their mutual commitments. These commitments include a set of ‘benchmarks’ on which Rwanda will have to demonstrate improvement, which are evaluated in the annual aid talks. These benchmarks include issues such as conflict prevention, governance and national unity and reconciliation. In the case of Uganda, a donor group of fifteen countries has established a ‘governance matrix’, including benchmarks that were identified on the basis of the local PRSP paper (PEAP), which forms the basis of political dialogue with the Ugandan government. This constructive method of conditioning aid, as opposed to traditional ‘all-or-nothing’ conditionality, should be applied to the other countries in the region. Coherence on a European level is crucial in this respect. The recent decision by Belgium to grant 75 million Euro to Rwanda, without benchmarks, in spite of the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden already using benchmarks in their aid to Rwanda, is a clear and unfortunate example of lack of coherence between EU member states.

Recommendations:

1. Aid for the Great Lakes region should be increased, especially to Burundi and the DRC who currently receive relatively less aid in comparison to Rwanda. These aid relations should be based on the benchmark approach.
2. Funds that were pledged to Burundi, for example in the donor conference in January³, should be released before the elections, but made conditional upon benchmarks, including benchmarks on a sound democratization process.
3. Countries that make use of the benchmark approach should encourage other European donors to adopt this approach as an instrument of political dialogue. Harmonisation of donor demands to individual countries should be the norm in order to avoid an overload of different requirements with which recipient countries will have to comply.
4. The EU should facilitate for common benchmarks to be negotiated and adopted by member states. The EU itself should also introduce benchmarks for its own assistance to governments in the region.
5. The European Union and its member states should study the possibility of formulating **regional benchmarks** to be applied in the aid relations with the different countries in the Great Lakes. These regional benchmarks should then of course be contextualised to the reality in these countries, and should be used as an instrument for creating an even-handed political dialogue. Such regional benchmarks can already be found, for example, in the NEPAD strategic framework, through which African states have committed themselves to a set of principles and goals, as well as in the Cotonou agreement.
6. An effective benchmarking system must include a transparent periodic monitoring mechanism, delegated to independent consultants, as well as mechanisms for civil society input.

4. Regional issues for the Great Lakes

Based on EURAC members' and their partners' experience in the region, EURAC has identified the following priority regional issues to be addressed in regional policy by the EU and its member states: 1) Peace and security, 2) Justice, governance and the rule of law, 3) Economic governance.

EURAC strongly urges donors to intensify the political dialogue with the governments in the region on all of these issues. This political dialogue should be intensive, consistent and even-handed. The following section of this position paper contains recommendations to the EU and its member states (unless otherwise indicated), that should be included in a regional policy in general, and be incorporated into an EU Common Strategy more specifically. Also, they should be addressed in the International Conference on Peace, Democracy, Good Governance and Development in the Great Lakes (hereafter: International Conference), of which the first summit is scheduled for the end of 2004.

³ During this conference, on 14 and 15 January 2004, more than a billion USD was pledged to Burundi.

Chapter II

Regional issues

1. Peace and security

1. Peace processes

Peace agreements have been signed in both Burundi and the DRC, and in Rwanda the transitional period was concluded in 2003. Such positive recent developments in the region indicate that there is reason for optimism that peace, stability and development can finally be achieved after years of chronic instability and insecurity. However, the peace process in each of the countries is fragile and has not yet been fully consolidated. In Kinshasa an attempted 'coup d'état' was launched in the end of March. Violent conflict broke out in Ituri, a North-eastern province of the DRC, in early 2003, and again more recently in and around Bukavu (South Kivu), which fell to armed rebel groups. This demonstrates the continued potential for armed conflict by rebel groups⁴, and the ongoing instability and insecurity in the eastern provinces of the DRC. In Burundi fighting has continued in spite of progress made in political negotiations. In Rwanda, since the genocide in 1994, although stability has been achieved by the Rwandan Government with support from donors, EURAC is concerned that today increased political oppression and human rights violations by the Rwandan Government, undermine the prospects for stability in Rwanda in the medium and longer term.

Arms proliferation continues to be a major threat to security in the region. The leaked confidential section of the UN Expert Panel on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of October 2003 (hereafter, the UN Expert Panel report) made the link between arms proliferation and the illegal resource exploitation by elite networks with economic interests. These networks remain under the influence of Rwanda, Uganda and certain members of the government in Kinshasa. EURAC is concerned that there is still the potential for renewed large-scale violence, as demonstrated by recent allegations of increased trafficking of arms in and around the Kivu area, in spite of the UN arms embargo as established in resolution 1493 of the UN Security Council.⁵

Recommendations:

- Establish an EU early warning and rapid reaction mechanism to enable a swift and effective response in the event of an escalation in conflict in the region (e.g. Ituri, Bukavu);
- Increased humanitarian aid should be made available to mitigate the consequences of violent conflict for the civilian population;
- Promote grassroots peace building and reconciliation efforts involving civil society;

⁴ 'Non à la reprise d'une guerre à grande échelle dans les Grands Lacs africains! Des ONG européennes demandent que la Mission des Nations Unies au Congo (MONUC) soit immédiatement redéployée sur la ville de Bukavu (République Démocratique du Congo) pour désarmer les troupes rebelles et demandent le retrait des troupes rwandaises du Congo'. Brussels, June 2nd, 2004, press release by EURAC.

⁵ Par 20, resolution 1493: "all States take the necessary measures to prevent the supply of arms and any related materiel or assistance to armed groups operating in North and South Kivu and in Ituri, and to groups not party to the Global and All-Inclusive agreement on the Transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo" (17/12/02)

- Identify mechanisms and instruments by which the EU can contribute to a more effective UN arms embargo for the DRC;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the EU embargo on arms sales to the DRC, in place since 1993 and reviewed in the light of the UN embargo in 2003.

2. UN missions MONUC (DRC) and ONUB (Burundi)

In 2003, a report was published by EURAC's predecessors⁶ in which the role of MONUC (UN Mission in the DRC) was criticized. A strong appeal was made to strengthen MONUC's mandate, in order to enable it to play a more proactive role. In July 2003 this was achieved through UN Resolution 1493 acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorized the increase of MONUC's military strength to 10,800 (from 8,700) as well as the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers under imminent threat of physical violence.

To analyse the performance of MONUC since its mandate was increased, it is necessary to make a distinction between the different provinces where MONUC troops are deployed. According to local sources⁷, the performance of MONUC in North and South Kivu, for example, is far from optimal and has tended to be very passive; MONUC is sometimes too slow in verifying and reporting on allegations and too cautious in denouncing verified breaches of the cease-fire. As a result, there has been growing frustration among the local people in these areas particularly since Bukavu fell into the hands of Rwandan-backed rebels on June 2nd. The feeling among the local population is that MONUC should have prevented this by playing a more proactive role in controlling the armed rebel groups.

MONUC's performance in Ituri, on the other hand, has been more positive, as MONUC stabilised the situation in and around Bunia, where its troops are concentrated. What happens outside of Bunia, in the more remote rural districts in Ituri, is less clear, however; the fear is that instability may have been displaced from within Bunia to the rural areas without MONUC presence.

EURAC welcomes the conversion of the African peace keeping mission AMIB in Burundi to the UN mission ONUB⁸, which led to the deployment of 5,650 troops from 1 June until 1 December 2004 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Its mandate however is too short; it should be extended to one year after the Burundian elections. We also hope that this decision will improve the coordination between both missions, and facilitate swifter responses to cross-border incidents, such as arms transfers and troop movements. In the past, such responses were delayed because of lengthy administrative procedures.

Recommendations:

1. Provide political, technical, and financial support to MONUC so that it can fulfil its current Chapter VII mandate, which requires MONUC to monitor the arms embargo and the ceasefire agreement and to protect civilians.
2. Under its mandate to monitor the cease-fire agreement and the arms embargo, MONUC must increase its patrols in border areas between the DRC and Rwanda and

⁶ The EURAC network was a merger between CCAC/GLAN and REC.

⁷ For this position paper, EURAC sent an inquiry to NGO partners in the Great Lakes.

⁸ Resolution 1545 of the Security Council of the UN, May 21st 2004.

- Uganda and provide timely and adequate reports on incidents such as infiltrations, attacks by armed groups (both national and foreign), and arms deliveries.
3. The UN must take steps to improve coordination between ONUB and MONUC to make the international response to cross border incidents more effective.
 4. MONUC should incorporate more synergy and coordination with knowledgeable local NGOs, in respect of its mandate to disarm and demobilise armed groups and individuals.
 5. The mandate of ONUB should be extended to at least one year after the elections in Burundi.

3. Demobilization, Disarmament, Repatriation, Reintegration and Reinstallation (DDRRR)

The DDRRR process, implemented through the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) of the World Bank, is crucial for the stability in the Great Lakes region. An estimated 150,000 Congolese fighters are still to be demobilized and either integrated into the new Congolese army, or helped to find an alternative civilian livelihood. In addition, several thousand foreign fighters are still to be demobilized and repatriated

EURAC welcomes the steps taken by the donor community to make significant amounts of funding available for DDRRR.⁹ However, EURAC is concerned that people at grassroots level feel that the current DDRRR process is rather top-down and does not sufficiently take into consideration the realities faced by local communities. An example of this is that small arms disarmament is neglected in the current DDRRR process. Many people simply resort to hiding their weapons rather than handing them over. Other flaws are that demobilized soldiers are often just given a sum of money and no further support to help them establish a civilian livelihood for themselves. Once these funds run out and they have no means to support themselves, there is a high risk that such demobilized soldiers will resort to criminal or violent acts to earn their living.

On a more political level, the DDRRR process risks creating an excuse for the donor community to avoid finding a negotiated political solution for the violence between armed groups. For example, the inter-Rwandese conflict which led to the 1994 genocide in fact remains unresolved as the Rwandan armed groups, some of which are responsible for carrying out the genocide in 1994, are today still roaming eastern DRC. As long as such underlying and deeply-rooted conflicts are not resolved, the DDRRR process cannot be fully effective, which explains the low numbers of demobilized people within the DDRRR process to date.

Recommendations:

- The MDRP program should be implemented by the World Bank in a less top-down way and be more focused on linking up with initiatives that exist at community level. Social and economic reintegration should be community based and/or linked to existing NGO initiatives.
- An initiative should be undertaken to intensify arms redemption in the region, especially for small arms. This should include developing methods of arms redemption based on social or community incentives, for example investing in

⁹ For the period 2002-2007, 223 million USD is available for the World Bank MDRP program.

educational or health facilities for the community once a certain amount of arms have been redeemed.

- The EU should sponsor an independent ‘food for work’ DDRRR program. Although care should be taken not to duplicate existing work by the World Bank MDRP; a parallel project, run in partnership with the transitional government or through an established NGO, would bring real benefits. Alongside the DDRRR process, donors should maintain the pressure on governments and armed groups in the region to negotiate political solutions.
- The EU should press for the swift establishment of a DDRRR program for child soldiers.

2. Justice, Governance and the Rule of Law

1. Democracy

The Great Lakes region is still searching for democracy. Old patterns in which small elites tend to monopolize economic, military and political power appear to be taking root again, especially in Uganda and Rwanda. In Burundi and the DRC this danger is evident as well. The potential for small elites to take over and consolidate power by abusing democratic procedures means that donors should avoid imposing simplistic blueprints for democracy. To date, donor policies on democratization have failed in this respect, as the concept of democracy has been simplified to the holding of elections and the promotion of multiparty democracy. According to a report of Dutch NGOs, this mistake was recently made in Rwanda, where the elections in 2003, which were supposed to mark the end of the process of transition to democracy, in practice led to the strengthening of anti-democratic tendencies.¹⁰ In Burundi and the DRC, the current process of preparing elections also risks being unsuccessful in establishing democracy, as donors tend to focus mainly on the election itself, while disregarding the quality of the wider democratic process and the importance of civic education.

Recommendations:

1. The main focus of donor policy for democratization should be: to create free and open societies, which allow for debate, criticism and freedom of expression, where civil society representatives, political opposition, religious representatives, media and ordinary people are free to challenge and hold to account their government without fear of oppression. This is possible through implementing the following measures:
 - strengthening the independence of the media;
 - promoting *trias politica*, by strengthening weak institutions, the judiciary and parliament, in order to create an effective system of checks and balances;
 - and strengthening the rule of law and basic human rights in general.
2. The above-mentioned principles should be used as benchmarks in aid relations with all the countries in the Great Lakes region.

¹⁰ See for example the Rwanda Monitoring Report 2003, published in February 2004 by Cordaid, ICCO, NOVIB and Kerkinactie, in the Netherlands.

2. Impunity and justice

One of the weakest points in donor policy is the insufficient focus on justice and impunity in the Great Lakes area. Lack of justice or selective impunity are potential factors contributing to current and future instability.¹¹ A policy goal for a European regional policy should be to strive towards even-handed justice in the entire region. However, this is complicated. For example in the current transitional government in the DRC, several members have positions in spite of their dubious human rights record. Indicting them at this stage might have a destabilizing effect on the peace process itself. However, even in such cases, impunity should not be taken for granted and donors should develop a strategy on how to bring to justice former armed groups and their internal and external accomplices accused of war crimes.

Recommendations:

- Promote the implementation of the full mandate of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), including the trial of crimes against humanity and war crimes by the RPF.
- About the International Criminal Court (ICC): Rwanda should be requested to sign and ratify in full, and Burundi to ratify in full the Statutes of the Treaty of Rome.
- In Burundi, the International Commission of Inquiry into the atrocities after the independence, should be finally established by the UN. The establishment of an International Commission was agreed upon in the Arusha Agreements of 2000.
- To continue strengthening an independent justice system in Rwanda, in the DRC and in Burundi and periodically evaluate the impact of these programs.

3. Empowerment of civil society

The empowerment of civil society is lacking as an important donor strategy for development and peace in the Great Lakes. The recent Dutch policy memorandum, establishing a regional policy for the Great Lakes, rightly suggests that the phenomenon of dysfunctional states might be a central cause for poverty and conflict in the Great Lakes region. Civil society should be strengthened in parallel to the strengthening of state institutions, to enable civil society to fulfill its role as a countervailing power, promoting a healthy system of checks and balances.

Empowerment of civil society should include, and go beyond, financial and institutional support to development NGOs and programs strengthening their administrative capacity. The EU must support the civil society strengthening by:

1. Adopting the institutional strengthening of local structures as an integral strategy underpinning all humanitarian, rehabilitation and development projects and programs;

¹¹ The mentioned report of the Rwanda Monitoring Project states that in Rwanda victors justice is currently prevailing, given that through the local justice system gacaca crimes against humanity committed by one party, the RPF, are not taken into account.

2. Monitoring the freedom of expression and association of civil society organizations. The EU should actively condemn and denounce repression against these basic human rights. Capacity building programs in the field of advocacy and lobbying should be supported;
3. Increasing support to grassroots peace building, civic education and information dissemination initiatives for supporting national reconciliation and the transition to peace and democracy;
4. Increase support to the creation of an independent media;
5. Increase support to cross-border exchange and learning by civil society organizations, through the organization of regional seminars and exchange programs etc.

4. Participation of civil society in the International Conference on the Great Lakes

EURAC welcomes initiatives taken by the UN and the African Union to convene an International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which might be held in November 2004. The idea of holding such a conference has been discussed by donor governments, the UN, and of course in the region itself, for several years now. However, concrete preparations for the conference were only launched after peace agreements in Burundi and the DRC were concluded in 2002-3. This conference should be more than a formal high-level meeting of heads of state, but rather, a genuinely participatory process accompanied by transparent and inclusive preparation and follow up.

EURAC firmly supports the intended outcome of the process, which will include a peace and stability pact for the Great Lakes region, to which sufficient political support and funding should be made available by the international community.

According to the recent reorganization of the conference agenda, two presidential meetings are scheduled. One is planned for the end of 2004, another will be held mid 2005. The official conference concept was developed by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN, Ibrahima Fall. He provides that both meetings will be preceded by several events regrouping state actors as well as non-state actors. UN agencies are involved with the organization of preparatory regional meetings of women, a youth festival and a civil society conference.

In all national preparatory committees to the UN Conference, civil society has been asked to delegate two participants. The influence of national governments in the selection of these participants raises doubts over their independence. This is particularly the case in Rwanda, for example, where civil society representatives were appointed by the presidential office. Also questions are justified about whether or not it will be possible for supra-national (regional) or international networks working in the Great Lakes, such as EURAC, to participate in the process as observers.

Recommendations to the SRSG of the UN and the governments of Canada and the Netherlands as the co-chair of the group of friends to the UN Conference:

- Ensure that in a new version of the Concept Paper on the conference by the SRSG, better provisions are made for civil society participation in the decision-making process of the UN/AU conference. The ACP-EU Cotonou Accord (articles 4 and 33

(5)) provides a legal framework for non-state actors to participate in all aspects of development cooperation between the EU and membership countries.

- Civil society participation should be increased beyond the current representation of two delegates in each national preparatory committees.
- The participatory nature of the preparation of the International Conference should be guaranteed. Adequate timing is needed for the organization of a consultation of the population in each of the participating countries when determining the agenda of the several events.
- Civil society organizations, including international networks should also be able to participate as observers to the governmental Conference.
- Sufficient funding should be made available to support the organization of national and regional civil society consultations, the consultation of women and youth in particular.
- Many civil society organizations in the region have already discussed and presented their proposals to the UN Conference. These should be seriously considered by the SRSG for the Great Lakes and the group of friends when preparing the UN Conference.

3. Economic Governance

From War Economy to Peace Economy

Competition for control over natural resources has fuelled instability and violence and perpetuated conflict in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the DRC. The plundering of natural resources continues to date, particularly through the ‘elite networks’ mentioned above, which were exposed in the UN Expert Panel report. More recent reports show that illegal exploitation continues.¹² Although Rwanda and Uganda are investigating the accusations by the UN Panel against them, there are questions about the credibility of these investigations.

Regulatory mechanisms, such as the Kimberly Process for the certification of diamonds or application of the guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) exist. However, these will only be effective in curbing illegal resource exploitation, if there is genuine political will within the EU to deal with the involvement of the European companies in the DRC war economy and ensure corporate social responsibility by European companies.

The exploitation of natural resources is in itself not negative if the revenues from these activities are managed effectively in order to promote development and stability and to transform a war economy into a peace economy through taking steps to ensuring that:

- resource exploitation activities are sustainable and the revenues from these are used to benefit the development of local communities;
- resource exploitation is transparent and regulated according to local legislation;
- resource exploitation contributes to development and stability instead of violence and instability.

¹² Testimonies by farmers in Northern Kivu and Ituri in Eastern Congo as reported by press agency Syfia on 23 December 2003. Other unconfirmed sources in the DRC suggest that Rwanda extracted coltan from the Masisi area in the presence of Rwandan military in March 2004, which was transported without proper custom control.

The UN Panel report confirmed that the arms trade was closely linked to the war economy in the Great Lakes. In July 2003 a UN arms embargo for Congo was installed by resolution 1493. Following the recommendations of the UN Expert Panel, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1533 in March 2004, declaring its determination to more closely monitor compliance with the arms embargo. The resolution also established a committee with the mandate to collect information, report to the Council on its work and formulate recommendations to take appropriate action. In addition, the resolution authorized MONUC to collect and seize arms and any related materials whose presence violates the measures imposed by resolution 1493. The newly appointed committee is to deliver a fact-finding report by mid-July. While EURAC welcomes these measure, we are concerned that this timeframe is too tight to produce a quality report.

Recommendation to the DRC transitional government

1. Trade in natural resources should be regulated by the State. Accountability should be promoted and appropriate and transparent legislation and regulations should be put in place by the DRC government to ensure that the Congolese population benefits from the natural wealth of the country.

Recommendations to the EU, its member states and other donors.

1. Continued illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC with the involvement of neighbouring states should be met with strong diplomatic measures, including (partial and/or temporary) freezing of aid.
2. Donor governments should rigorously monitor the role of their national companies operating in the DRC. The mechanism that exists under the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* for the investigation of company conduct should be used with a view to issuing public recommendations on compliance. This will require revisiting many cases which have already been declared closed by the UN Panel.
3. Donors should intensify the pressure on Rwanda and Uganda to seriously investigate the allegations by the UN Expert Panel.
4. The EU should request all parties involved in exploitation of natural resources in the DRC to be transparent about the contracts they have and their resource exploitation activities.
5. The EU, the IMF and the World Bank should urge companies and states to implement the Publish What You Pay principle.
6. Donors should try to promote a multi-stakeholder approach to the development of the exploitation of natural resources, including local communities, private sector, local and national governments and perhaps international financial institutions. This should include, for example, the promotion of community-based forestry management.
7. EU member states should cooperate actively with the UN Committee on the arms trade and implement its recommendations.
8. A regional economic integration policy should be promoted, aimed at creating a common market for local products, intra regional trade and food security. Amongst others, the existing Economic Community of the Countries of the Great Lakes (CEPGL), should be revived for that purpose and a strategy should be developed to ensure complementarity between regional integration through the CEPGL on the one hand and the Common Market for East and South Africa (COMESA) on the other.

Signatories:

- 11.11.11. , Coalition of the North-South Movement in Flandres, Belgium
- ACAT, France
- All Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes Region and Genocide Prevention - APPG, House of Commons, United Kingdom
- ATOL, Belgium
- Broederlijk Delen, Belgium
- CCFD, France
- CDI-Bwamanda-Belgium
- Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement -CRID, France
- Centre d'information et de solidarité avec l'Afrique – COSI, France
- Christian Aid, United Kingdom
- CIMADE, France
- CNCI Belgium
- Commission Justice et Paix belge francophone
- Damien Foundation, Belgium
- Dan Church Aid, Danmark
- Diakonia, Sweden
- Entraide et Fraternité, Belgium
- Fastenopfer Switzerland
- Frères des Hommes-France
- ICCO, The Netherlands
- KBA/Foncaba, Belgium
- Kerkinactie, The Netherlands
- Le Comité de Jumelage de Villefontaine, France
- Manos Unidas, Spain
- Médecins du Monde, France
- Misereor, Germany
- Norwegian Church Aid
- Ökumenisches Netz Zentralafrika, Germany
- Protestant Solidarity Belgium
- Réseau France Congo
- Rete Pace per il Congo, Italy
- Save the Children UK
- Secours Catholique, France
- Socialist Solidarity, Belgium
- SOS Faim, Belgium