

Africa-Canada Forum Backgrounder – Briefing Note 6

Africa Matters

Promoting Sustainable
and Inclusive Peace
in Africa

The Africa-Canada Forum (ACF) is a Working Group of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and brings together NGOs, churches, unions, and solidarity groups from across Canada that have a specific interest in development issues and social justice in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Its purpose is twofold: (i) to improve the quality and impact of the work of participating groups through reflection and analysis of current programming relationships in Africa; and (ii) to improve the coordination of policy development and strategies for joint action and advocacy, in dialogue with African counterparts and colleagues.

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Africa Matters: Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Peace in Africa

Briefing Note 6

Canada should make sustainable, inclusive peace a priority in Canadian Foreign, Development, and Defense policy. To this end it should:

- **Strengthen African conflict prevention, peace-building and peace-making capacities, through long-term financial and diplomatic support to regional initiatives and organizations**, including the African Union – emphasizing conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution capacities.
- **Commit troop deployments and financial support to UN peace operations in Africa.** Specifically, Canada should increase Canadian forces, policing, and civilian deployments to supporting peace operations, for example in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.
- **Prioritize women’s role in peace processes by supporting** women’s groups to engage in peace processes, encouraging women’s political participation and decision-making, and funding programs that end violence against women.
- **To this end, develop and make public a Canadian National Action Plan on Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent Resolutions on sexual violence and women in conflict** through comprehensive transparent consultation with Canadian civil society and African women’s groups.¹
- **Take all possible actions, in consultation with all relevant African institutions, to prevent and respond to genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity** including by early diplomatic engagement and combating impunity for grave human rights abuses.
- **To this end, support politically and financially, local, traditional, national and international justice mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court (ICC)** to hold accountable perpetrators of grave crimes including the forced recruitment of child soldiers and sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Support comprehensive reforms to strengthen African states emerging from conflict and prevent the emergence of new conflicts by supporting democratic local actions** through citizens, particularly women, and civil society organizations to contribute to bottom-up processes of peace-building, social reconciliation, and equitable management of natural resources.
- **Curb the illicit transfer and trade in small arms and light weapons by fully supporting a strong Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to be in place by the end of 2012.**

¹ In 2000 the United Nations (UN) Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security to include women’s rights, gender equality and women’s participation in peace and security initiatives, including in developing and implementing peace agreements. In 2008, resolution 1820 on sexual violence, and more recently resolution 1888 also on sexual violence but more specifically looking at peacekeeping forces and their role in protecting women from sexual violence were also adopted.

Background

Africa is home to about 40 per cent of armed conflicts with at least 1,000 fatalities in the world today.² Out of 50 countries on the continent, 11 are considered to be experiencing or involved in some form of armed conflict.³ Over the last 15 years, 18 of the 33 African Least Developed Countries (LDC) have been affected by conflict, which further undermines progress in poverty reduction, human rights and women's rights, and development.

Civilians, and in particular vulnerable populations, women, and children pay a very high price as a result of conflicts. Violence, including horrific and rising sexual violence as in the case of the DRC, has a direct impact not just on the individual women but also on communities' health and livelihoods. Child soldiers are more numerous in Africa than elsewhere in the world, and they are active in rebel and militia groups, as well as in some government forces. About a fifth of the world's 500 million small arms and light weapons are found in Africa. Child soldiers involved in conflicts by non-state actors are the main users of SALWs. Migration flows, another direct consequence of conflicts, have largely contributed to the over 13 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa,⁴ which include a majority of women and children.⁵

Since the 1990's, key causes of African conflicts have been identified to be related the failure of democratic processes and governance issues. Competition over scarce resources, increasingly exacerbated by climate change, is often an important underlying factor of conflict, as can be currently seen in the Horn of Africa, southern Sudan and the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. The fair sharing of natural resources, including land, minerals, oil, forests, and in particular water, will be major challenges in the future.

Despite the decline in the number of conflicts since the end of the Cold War, hard cases remain in eastern Congo, Somalia, and Sudan. Countries, which experienced violent conflict over the past 10 to 15 years such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda, are still in the process of post-conflict rebuilding, while others face high levels of political unrest and violence, as is the case for Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger and Madagascar.

In Africa, democratization efforts mainly focused on competitive elections, promoted by the donor community as the prerequisite for democracy, often result in the legitimization of an already strong executive power and the creation of a more or less effective legislative power, without investing in the other pillars of democracy such as the judiciary, independent press and civil society organizations.⁶

² Armed Conflicts Report 2009, Ploughshares, <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-TitlePage.html>.

³ In 2008, these countries included Algeria, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Sudan-DARfur and Uganda.

⁴ http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/4444d3cc11.html#_ftn3.

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html>.

⁶ L'avenir des opérations de maintien de la paix dans les conflits contemporains, Speech by Louise Arbour, President CEO, International Crisis Group, 7 octobre 2009, www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6364&l=1.

The African Union (AU) – through its Peace and Security Council – has demonstrated its will to play more important roles in peacekeeping operations, through diplomatic efforts in conflict resolution, and more recently in taking a strong stance and thus helping to delegitimize military coups d'état and illegal take over in Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau. To date the AU has been involved in three peace operations: the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in 2003; the African Union Mission in Sudan (Darfur) (AMIS) in 2006; and the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007. Given the complexity of these conflicts and the limited capacities of the AU, these operations have been supported by a UN operation. In the Sudan, the AMIS was replaced by a hybrid UN-AU operation to preserve an “African character”, in response to a Sudanese government request.

African sub-regional organizations have also played an important part, along with nongovernmental and civil society organizations involved in peacemaking and peace-building, in negotiated settlements, such as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan.⁷

Canada has supported peace processes in Africa in the past decade, mainly by providing financial, diplomatic and material support. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2003, Canada actively supported the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which brought together the various political factions involved in the conflict to set the parameters for the political transition towards democracy, and which led to the Global and Inclusive Peace Agreement. Canada provided substantial funding for the presidential elections in 2006. In 2008, Canada financially supported the Goma Peace Process and the Amani Program but not with nearly the same kind of political or substantive involvement as in the past, drawing concern that Canada was retreating from its presence in Africa, and more specifically DRC.

The Canadian government played a role as a member of the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT) and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region which was set up to support the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The ICGLR brought together 11 countries in the region to agree on a set of protocols. As another example of support to peace processes, Canada funded the 2006 Juba Peace Process between the Lord's Resistance Army and Ugandan government.

In Sudan, Canada's contribution to peace efforts, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, early recovery and international peacekeeping missions in Sudan has reached over \$760 million since January 2006. It has played a central diplomatic role in the process headed by the African Union that led to the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006. Through the Global Peace and Security Fund managed by START, Canada is supporting the political and social consolidation of peace in Sudan by promoting initiatives in several key areas including: strengthening judicial institutions, federalism, corrections reform, improving community security, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), as well as capacity building of stakeholders in the Darfur peace talks. In addition, Canadian Forces personnel and civilian police officers have been involved in peacekeeping operations in Sudan, in particular the UNMIS, mainly as peacekeepers and military observers in southern Sudan.⁸

⁷ Human security: Setting the agenda for the Horn of Africa, John Siebert, The Ploughshares Monitor, Summer 2009, volume 30, N° 2 <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/monitor/monj09g.pdf>.

⁸ <http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/sudan-soudan/approach-approche.aspx?lang=eng>.

However, in spite of these initiatives, Canada's approach to supporting peace processes remains ad-hoc. Since the end of the 1990s, Canada has moved away from UN missions that were struggling at the time with new realities without having the means to address them: large-scale massacres, civil wars or ethnic cleansing such as in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda. As the UN was drawing lessons from its failures and adapting its missions consequently, Canada chose to focus its interventions on operations led by like-minded country coalitions. The Canadian contribution in terms of staff involved in UN missions went from 10 per cent in 1991 to less than 0.2 per cent in 2009. And today only 40 Canadian military and 26 civilian police officers are taking part in the 3 UN missions in Africa, in Ivory Coast, the DRC and Sudan. The demand for peacekeeping in Africa has been increasing with more than 72,000 peace-keepers deployed in places like Southern Sudan, Darfur, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia in 2009.⁹

An essential part of preventing violence and conflict and promoting peace is ensuring accountability for serious human rights abuses. International justice has made strides in the past decade in developing norms and mechanisms for holding perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing accountable for their abuses. Sexual and gender-based violence and the recruitment of child soldiers have been established as punishable under international law. Canada played a leading role in helping to establish the International Criminal Court, and has supported other international justice mechanism including the tribunals and courts in Sierra Leone, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. In the case of Uganda, Canada has funded consultations on accountability and justice and the establishment of national justice mechanisms. Over the next years, Canada should increase its support to strengthening justice mechanisms and accountability of serious rights abuses committed in times of conflict through traditional, national, and international justice processes.

At present, Canada's dwindling prioritization of Africa may affect the sustainability and implementation of peace efforts in places like DRC and Uganda, not to mention a number of smaller countries. Of the 20 CIDA Countries of Focus, only 7 are from Africa, with 5 of these countries – Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, and Sudan – being both Least Developed Countries and conflict-affected. The Department of Foreign Affairs' Global Peace and Security Fund (GPSF), aimed at supporting fragile states, at present includes Sudan, Uganda, and DRC (a modest program), as the only African countries on the government's priority list. Unfortunately the low priority given to Africa at both CIDA and DFAIT's GPSF, makes support for Africa in general more challenging, and support for peace processes and peace-building activities all the more difficult.

Canada needs to develop a long-term and sustained strategic approach that support peace processes in Africa. For Canada's support to be more effective, it will need to go beyond sending observers to peace-talks. Commitments should be multi-year, consistent in policy when there are changes in government and should include support for civil society organizations (CSOs). To do this, Canada needs to have a policy framework and accessible funds dedicated to peace processes that allows for different approaches to respond to the range of conflicts in Africa.

⁹ Canada's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping, <http://www.peacebuild.ca/work-groups-peace-operations-e.php>.

A Few Facts

- The number of refugees in Africa has declined to 2.1 million from 3.4 million since 2004. Yet, renewed and new conflicts have produced an additional 210 000 new refugees.¹⁰
- There are currently over 13 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa.¹¹ Over 50 per cent of the refugees and IDPs are women and children.¹²
- Displaced children are the most vulnerable during conflicts as they are more likely to be neglected and exposed to abuses including sexual exploitation, trafficking and recruitment.¹³
- The majority of conflicts that occurred in 2008 were not new conflicts, but the resumptions of fighting after failed peace agreements and negotiations.¹⁴
- Africa's portion of international imports of major conventional weapons has increased between the 1999-2003 and 2004-2008 periods from 6 per cent to 7 per cent.¹⁵
- Of the 500 millions Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) that are found around the world, 100 million of them are found in Africa. SALW are often used by non-state actors, and are the weapons of choice in conflicts which have involved the use of child soldiers.¹⁶
- Africa has the highest number of child soldiers in the world. They are active in rebel and militia groups, as well as some government forces.¹⁷
- Resources like diamonds, lumber and oil continue to fuel conflicts across Africa.¹⁸
- Land grabs are an increasing concern that will fuel tensions and could lead to open conflict and political volatility.¹⁹

¹⁰ <http://www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html>.

¹¹ http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/4444d3cc11.html#_ftn3.

¹² <http://www.unhcr.org/4a375c426.html>.

¹³ [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/82DA6A2DE4C7BA41C12575A90041E6A8/\\$file/IDM_C_Internal_Displacement_Global_Overview_2008.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/82DA6A2DE4C7BA41C12575A90041E6A8/$file/IDM_C_Internal_Displacement_Global_Overview_2008.pdf).

¹⁴ [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/82DA6A2DE4C7BA41C12575A90041E6A8/\\$file/IDM_C_Internal_Displacement_Global_Overview_2008.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/82DA6A2DE4C7BA41C12575A90041E6A8/$file/IDM_C_Internal_Displacement_Global_Overview_2008.pdf).

¹⁵ http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/transfers/data_on_inter_arms_trade_default/recent_trends/siprifs0904.

¹⁶ http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AUC/Departments/PSC/Small_Arms.htm.

¹⁷ <http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/facts-and-figures-child-soldiers>.

¹⁸ http://www.globalwitness.org/pages/en/natural_resources_in_conflict.html.

¹⁹ "Seized: The 2008 land grab for food and financial security", GRAIN briefing, October 2008, (11 pp), plus Annex (11 pp). Available at: <http://www.grain.org/go/landgrab>.