

**United Nations  
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa**

**Aide-Memoire**

**“International Conference on DDR and Stability in Africa”  
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo – 12-14 June 2007**

**Background**

In recent years, a significant number of African countries have emerged from conflict and are now undertaking disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. The importance of successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to preventing the recurrence of violence and creating the conditions for sustainable peace and development has been long recognized. However, there is ample evidence that current DDR practices often do not accomplish those objectives since there have been numerous instances of African countries relapsing into violence. In fact, about 50% of post-conflict countries in Africa revert back to conflict within five years<sup>1</sup>.

In view of the importance of this issue to peace and development in Africa, OSAA organized an International Conference on DDR and Stability in Africa from 21 to 23 June 2005 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Conference drew more than 100 participants, including delegates from 15 African countries, as well as representatives of a number of donor countries and international and regional organizations. The African participants represented a broad spectrum of DDR stakeholders, including government officials, current and former members of national DDR commissions, DDR practitioners and other experts, beneficiaries of DDR programmes, members of armed forces, representatives of host communities, women’s and civil society associations.

One of the recommendations of this conference was to strengthen the network of African DDR practitioners and build DDR capacity among African stakeholders by developing a regular and sustainable DDR evaluation process enabling the sharing of the practical experiences of African countries themselves as well as their international partners. For this purpose, it was recommended that consultative DDR reviews should take place at least every two years. As part of its endeavor to implement this recommendation, OSAA plans to organize a follow-up conference in cooperation with the Governments of Belgium and Sweden to take place in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo from 12-14 June 2007<sup>2</sup>. The conference should build on the achievements of the Freetown Conference and focus on African-owned processes

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Collier, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, (World Bank: Washington D.C., 2003) Page 7.

<sup>2</sup> Depending on the outcome of the general election and the successful establishment of democratic governance and the result of assessment mission to DRC scheduled in January 2007, the venue will be determined.

enhancing effective policy formulation and strategy implementation in African DDR programmes.

### **Focus of the Conference**

The conference in Sierra Leone brought African voices to the forefront on issues of DDR and stability. The upcoming conference in Kinshasa will pursue the same objective as the DDR conference in Sierra Leone, namely, to facilitate further dialogue, particularly amongst Africans, in order to identify best practices and lessons learned. For this purpose, about 20-25 countries will be invited from different African sub-regions, as well as a number of substantive international experts. The political significance of having the conference in Kinshasa is to highlight the importance of the newly established government after the successful presidential elections in July 2006. The conference will be pan-African in scope, with the intention of facilitating the sharing of experiences and perspectives from across the continent. At the same time, the conference will have a particular focus on DDR in the Great Lakes region.

### **Objectives of the Conference**

The overall objective of this conference is to improve the effectiveness of DDR programmes in Africa in promoting peace and development after conflict. In this regard it should be emphasized that good governance is a pre-requisite for peace and stability in Africa. Within this framework, the conference will aim to achieve the following objectives:

1. To strengthen and build the capacity of African DDR practitioners and experts by providing them with a forum to share their experiences. This builds on a key recommendation of the Sierra Leone conference, which was to foster networking by African DDR practitioners to facilitate both regional integration of DDR efforts and the sharing of knowledge, experience and best practices for improving DDR programmes across the continent. The Kinshasa conference will develop, strengthen and expand this network.
2. To enable and facilitate dialogue in Africa on selected issues of special importance in order to enhance understanding and develop recommendations. Human rights, good governance, gender issues and community based approach should be considered as cross-cutting themes for all the specific subjects. In addressing the issues on disarmament and demobilization, the target population should be not only ex-combatants but also civilians who may have involved in the conflicts. The particular issues to be addressed in this conference will include:
  - a. ***Combatants on Foreign Soil*** - Combatants on Foreign Soil (COFS) are a major challenge to peace and security in Africa, particularly in post-conflict environments. Since many African disputes occur within a regional context, combatants on foreign soil are involved in virtually all contemporary African conflicts. The problem is especially acute in the Great Lakes region of Africa, where regional conflicts involved combatants from the Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. DDR

programs, which in the past have been exploited by COFS who, rather than participate in the appropriate program, shop around for the program offering the most attractive benefits, need to prevent manipulation of this sort by combatants as well as reduce the risks that such groups will destabilize neighboring states. In addition, the issues related to trafficking of small arms and light weapons needs to be addressed.

- b. ***DDR and Transitional Justice*** - DDR programs and Transitional Justice tend to be implemented, and even developed, in relative isolation from each other, which not only misses opportunities for coordination but also hampers their ability to implement DDR and successfully achieve long term reintegration and reconciliation. For example, efforts by institutions such as the International Criminal Court to prosecute rebel leaders for war crimes may sometimes impede the willingness of combatants to join a DDR process, requiring better coordination between external and local actors to ensure that the goals of peace and justice do not cut across each other. DDR programs also often seek to reintegrate former combatants into communities that were victimized by those combatants during the conflict. The acceptance of ex-combatants into these communities often requires a transitional justice process that enables both parties to move beyond this wrenching history.
- c. ***Children and women associated with armed forces and groups*** – Post-conflict peace missions in Africa normally have to address the problems and needs posed by female ex-combatants, child soldiers and other children closely associated with the conflict. DDR programs need to be designed to address these challenges. Recently, some DDR programs have been tailored to address the specific needs of child soldiers, but girls associated with armed militias are often excluded or neglected in these DDR programs, either deliberately or inadvertently. Even where children are brought into the DDR programs, they are often seen as an adjunct of the broader DDR processes, which is problematic, as the objectives of DDR programmes for children are often much different and require a greater degree of flexibility. Similarly, there is growing recognition of the need to take into account the specific concerns and needs of women ex-combatants, but implementation has been very uneven. There is, as yet, no common understanding of how best to meet the needs of children, including child soldiers, or of adult women in DDR programs.
- d. ***The linkage between SSR and DDR*** – In practice, consideration of SSR is often delayed until after DDR programs are complete. But this has proven to be a counterintuitive approach. The exploration of linkages between programs of SSR and DDR is mutually beneficial for their continued development and evolution and is a topic that is particularly relevant to Africa. SSR considerations are particularly important in planning and implementing demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. The challenge lies in transforming the role of ex-combatants to that which will be constructive and beneficial to the security situation of the post-conflict society, such as absorbing

them into the ranks of the military and police, while maintaining effective executive government oversight to ensure political stability and development of the post-conflict society. Proper establishment of the security sector is essential for creating an enabling environment conducive to foreign direct investment, trade and economic growth which would lead to job creation and the formation of a stable economy.

3. To formulate recommendations of the best practices and strategies for DDR programs in Africa, particularly in the issue areas identified above.
4. To draw further attention by African and international stakeholders to the importance of improving the overall political, social and economic environments in post-conflict countries, within a broad framework of peacebuilding. Strengthening resettlement and rehabilitation programmes, governance, judicial and security systems, job creation and other sectors can help ensure effective follow-up to DDR programmes and prevent any slide back into conflict. While not part of DDR programmes as such, these are cross-cutting issues which can greatly influence the success of DDR and which require greater coordination by various national, regional and international actors. The Conference will provide forum for interaction between African countries and the development partners.

### **Outcome of the Conference:**

The outcomes of the conference will include the following:

- Enhanced networking, particularly among African practitioners, and the establishment of a sustainable foundation for the network;
- Development and cross-fertilization of knowledge and experience of DDR design, implementation and operation in Africa, enhancing Africa's capacity for successful DDR and other programs intended to achieve sustainable peace and development after conflicts;
- Greater understanding of the requirements of African practitioners and policy makers by their international cooperation partners for peace and development, including the donor community and UN system;
- Practical recommendations for policy makers and programme designers to improve the formulation of DDR related policies and program orientation.

## **Proposed Programme**

### **12 June 2007**

9:00 – 9:30

#### **Opening Session**

- Introductory statements to be made by high level conference participants

9:45 – 10:45

#### **Plenary Session 1**

- Presentation of overview of DDR programmes and current practices in Africa

11:00 – 16:00

#### **Plenary Session 2**

- Presentation and discussion on “Exchange of Country Specific DDR Experiences”
- Lunch break (12:30-14:00)

16:15 – 1800

#### **Plenary Session 3**

- Presentation and discussion on “Public-Private partnerships in Reintegration Processes” by representatives of the private sector.

18:30 – 20:00

#### **Reception hosted by DRC Government (TBC)**

### **13 June 2007**

9:00 – 10:30

#### **Plenary Session 4**

- “Critical Issues in DDR programmes”

10:30 – 12:30

#### **Breakout Sessions**

- Breakout sessions on substantive issues, including:
  1. The linkage between SSR and DDR
  2. Children and women associated with armed forces and groups
  3. DDR and Transitional Justice
  4. Combatants on Foreign Soil

14:30 – 17:30

#### **Breakout Sessions (continued)**

- Discussion of the issues based on country experiences
- Formulation of outcomes

18:30 – 20:00

#### **Reception (TBC)**

### **14 June 2007**

9:30 – 12:30

#### **Plenary Session 5**

- Presentation and exchange of views of the outcomes of the group discussions

14:00 – 15:45

#### **Closing Session**

- Formulation of practical recommendations for policy makers and programme designers to improve the formulation of DDR related policies and programme orientation.

16:30

- Press Conference

18:30 – 20:00

**Reception hosted by DRC Government (TBC)**

### **Preparatory Process**

Task force has been established and meets every month, or as appropriate, in New York, Brussels and Kinshasa. These task forces are comprised of members from relevant UN departments/agencies and offices as well as representatives from the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and from the Government of Belgium. In addition, video conferences are organized in conjunction with the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) at the World Bank<sup>3</sup>. These video conferences engage African stakeholders in early preparation leading up to the conference as a valuable forum for the exchange of African viewpoints on relevant topical issues related to the conference. Through the engagement of experts, OSAA undertakes the preparation of an overview paper as well as issue papers to be written on: Combatants on Foreign Soil; DDR and Transitional Justice; Child Soldiers and Children in Conflict; and the Linkage between SSR and DDR.

### **Participants**

The preliminary list of anticipated participants includes representatives from the following African countries:

Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

A number of participants from each country will be invited to the conference. The composition of each country team should be diversified to include broad involvement by members of government including policy makers; DDR commissioners, practitioners and beneficiaries; NGOs or civil society; the private sector and academia. Relevant UN organizations, the African Union, international experts, and others will also be invited to the conference.

**Contacts:** For further information, please contact:

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<sup>3</sup> MDRP is undertaking a number of DDR programs in the greater Great Lakes Region with a budget of approximately \$400 million.